真・天地無用！魎皇鬼外伝

天地無用！GXP 1

梶島正樹　白根秀樹

富士見ファンタジア文庫

イラスト　梶島正樹

SHIN TENCHI MUYO! RYO-OHKI GAIDEN

真・天地無用！魎皇鬼外伝

天地無用！GXP

TENCHI MUYO! GXP 1

"Allow me to introduce Seina-sama's entertainers for the day."
When Minaho spoke, the four women, who had been waiting in the back,
suddenly moved forward and removed their hoods at the same time.

Kiriko's face went red up to her ears. As she looked down, she realized that she had completely fallen into Seto's trap...

True Tenchi Muyo! Ryo-Ohki Side Story

Tenchi Muyo! GXP1

Masaki Kajishima / Hideki Shirane

Table of Contents

Chapter One: To the Cosmos	6
Chapter Two: An Important Package	41
Chapter Three: The Demon Princess	84
Chapter Four: Dirty Mist, Sorrowful Rain	149
Afterword	205

Illustrations

Cover - Amane, Kiriko and Seina	Cover
Pinup 1 - Amane	2
Pinup 2 - Masaki Minaho, Hakuren, Karen, Suiren, Gyokuren	3
Pinup 3 - Masaki Kiriko and Mikami Kuramitsu	4
Kyoko and Yoshiko Yamada	8
Pinup 1 - Amane	16
Mitoto Kuramitsu and Seina Yamada	35
Seina fantasizing about Kiriko	52
Onnainin, Mitoto and Seina	75
Kamiki Seto Jurai and Kanemitsu Hirata	92
Pinup 2 - Minaho Masaki, Hakuren, Karen, Suiren, Gyokuren	97
Gyokuren	103
Seina and Hakuren	131
Ryoko Balta and Alan	150
Mitoto and Minami Kuramitsu	164
Pinup 3 - Kiriko Masaki and Mikami Kuramitsu	191
Seina and Airi Masaki	192

Chapter One: To the Cosmos!

It was an early summer afternoon when the rainy season had ended and the intense sunlight cast jet-black shadows, as if to relieve the previous depression. In the endlessly high blue sky, huge cumulonimbus clouds were spreading.

A single bicycle, its silver wheels glinting in the sunlight, flew along a country road.

A fourteen or fifteen year old boy pedaled his bicycle in the hot weather with a frantic look on his face, wasting no time, even though he was not a club member.

“Kai should have told me sooner!”

The boy’s name was Yamada Seina.

The protagonist of this story, the “Passionate One” who was at the mercy of his singularly bad luck …… and was caught in the maelstrom of a great destiny….

Seina, pedaled his bicycle in the humid heat, his sweaty, frantic face raising the ambient temperature and discomfort level even higher… in short, he was in a hurry.

He had gone straight home from school without taking any detours, hit his foot on the corner of a pillar, misbuttoned his shirt twice, slipped in the hallway, fell down the stairs, stepped wrong on his bicycle pedal, and so on. He was in a great hurry to get out of the house.

If he was in such a hurry, he should have just gone straight from school without stopping at home… well, it was a bit pointless, but there you have it, seriousness is good! People shouldn’t take things for granted … well, anyway. To return to the story, his destination was one mountain away, the home of his classmate and childhood best friend, Masaki Kai.

Of course, it was not because he was in a hurry to meet my classmates or because he would lend him some erotic videos or books.

It was because Kai’s sister “Masaki Kiriko”, whom Seina had a crush on, had returned home from her job.

Seina ran his hand over his head as he pedaled down the paved dirt road.

Underneath his helmet, hidden from view, was a shaved head that had been beautifully done, even though he was not a member of the gymnastics club.

“If I had known that, I would have taken care of it. … I just got Kiriko back, and now this…” He muttered to himself, and convinced himself that, well, it was better than when he had a skinhead.

Just two weeks ago, he had the head of a green monk.

Here's how it happened.

That day, Seina slipped on the stairs at home, fell heavily, and hit his head.

Normally, he would get up and continue doing what he was doing, rubbing his head and saying, "Ow!" But this time he passed out, which was rare.

He was immediately rushed to the hospital, but fortunately there were no serious injuries, and the results of a thorough examination showed no abnormalities, indicating that he was a strong person. Seina was supposed to be discharged from the hospital immediately. However, due to some kind of paperwork error or miscommunication, a new nurse mistook him for a patient scheduled for a craniotomy, and while he was sleeping, half of his head was shaved clean.

He woke up and protested, but it was too late. Surrounded by laughing staff, in- and outpatients, he was made a practice subject for new nurses, and after being toyed with in a number of bizarre shaving techniques, including a Mohawk and crop circle shave, he was left with multiple razor nicks.

"Seina, you're lucky you have a good head shape."

With a not-so-comforting line, a rewarding juice was handed to him.

It was in a paper cup for urinalysis.

——Incidentally, this was before it had been used for its intended purpose.

"What, Seina, do you look like Ikkyu-san again?" ******Ikkyū-san, 1975-1982, An anime based on a Zen Buddhist monk*****

When Seina arrived at school the next day, his friends made fun of him.

It was no wonder they said that, because every time he was injured, he went back to school with a fresh haircut. Of course, "a break" also implied taking time off from school due to hospitalization.

No matter how bad luck it may be every time, he was at an age where "being shaved" hurt much more than anything else, even more than his injuries. Whenever he was teased about it, Seina gently stroked his lush head with an expression of displeasure.

Although he was well aware of his bad luck, it could be somewhat difficult at times.

(… This isn't happening…)

Just as he was in this reminiscing mode, the front wheel of his bicycle hit a pebble and he lost his balance.

"!?"

The view rotated vigorously.

The ground, the bicycle handlebars, the sky, and the smell of cabbages and earth.

A moment later, Seina plunged his bicycle into the field alongside the road.

The wheels spun round and round.

A slightly quick-tempered cicada was chirping in the distance.

Now the scene changes to a small general store.

This old grocery and general merchandise store, with the almost-extinct "Yamada Shoten" sign, is Seina's home.

A closer look at the interior revealed that while damage to the storefront was not very noticeable, the residential areas, including walls, stairs, and ceilings, had been repaired in many places and but was still in disrepair.

To put it bluntly, it was pretty rundown.

All of the damaged areas and repairs were due to Seina's misfortune. Since it was impossible to keep up with all the repairs, they began to leave the house alone as long as it did not cause any problems.

"Brother, are you there yet?"

The girl with pigtails looked up at her mother next to her as she saw off a customer who had bought a set of clothespins and a can of corned beef for 390 yen.

"It's Seina. I don't think it's going to be a straight path."

"I hope he gets to meet Kiriko this time."

The girl giggled as she said this.

The girl was Yamada Yoshiko, Seina's younger sister by three years, named by her mother in the hope that she would not be like her unfortunate brother.

"Thank God Kiriko is back."

“When brother is around, we really don’t get many customers, do we?”

Then Yoshiko giggled again.

There were no convenience stores or large supermarkets in the neighborhood, and the area was mostly vacant. Normally, this place would be quite prosperous, but for some reason, Seina’s presence kept the customers away.

“Really. The only good luck he ever had was meeting Kiriko.”

“He spent it all on that.”

“I guess it’s a one-size-fits-all thing.”

Her mother, Yamada Kyoko, smiled happily as she counted the ten-yen coins in the cash register.

“But, Mom. The sad part is that so far they’ve only met.”

“Pity the poor kid.”

Even as she said this, Kyoko’s face was smiling.

The poor boy was still struggling with his head stuck in the field.

Kiriko was a woman five years older than Seina, who had taken care of him since he was a child. She was a goddess to Seina, who never gave up on him, even though he was unlucky and often involved other people.

However, since she started working, he had had very few chances to see her, and this was her trip home in six months. For Seina, those six months had been like a thousand and one days… No, it had been six months he last saw her, but it had been over a year since they had been able to have a proper conversation, so it was not surprising that he felt as if it had been more like two thousand days.

Now, as to why it has been a year since Kiriko’s last visit? It was a tear-jerker to hear and talk about - six months ago when Kiriko returned home, Seina was on his way to Kai’s house, just as he was today.

However, halfway there he got into an accident and was taken to the hospital. Despite his minor injuries, for some reason he was given a sedative and fell asleep. In the end, Seina only saw Kiriko’s back as she left his hospital room when she received an emergency call from her workplace.

But not today!

At a crossroads, he made sure to look both ways properly and watch out for cars.

… Running into a field was… well, funny. Good thing he was wearing a helmet.

(Anyway. I'll see you this time!)

When he meets her, she may say, "Long time no see, you had a hard time the other day."

She might worry about head injuries.

Even if she didn't notice it, she would definitely give him that gentle smile.

"Kiriko, I'm coming…"

With a slack-jawed face, Seina stood up heroically.

"Are you all right? Did you hit your head?"

An old woman, the owner of the field, saw Seina's face and called out to him.

After shaking his head and apologizing for the hole he had made in the field. He carefully brushed the dirt off his clothes and climbed back on his bike. His elbow was a little scraped, but nothing serious. To Seina, an injury of this level did not count as an injury.

(I wonder how many times I have fallen since I got this bike.)

One time, in the rice paddies.

One time, in a field.

Another time, he landed in the river…

Each time, he scraped his knee, dislocated his shoulder, or sprained his ankle. It wasn't that Seina was extremely careless.

Certainly, some percentage was due to his own negligence. However, Seina had a lot of accidents and bad luck that could not be explained by that alone.

No matter how careful he was, no matter how prudently he acted, bad luck struck Seina through the cracks. It was just so brilliant.

If he went swimming, the elastic on his swim trunks would break.

If he played ping-pong, a paddle that slipped out of an opponent's hand would hit him.

When he went to watch gym sports, he would be hit in the face by a flying volleyball.

In his life, he never had a day that ended peacefully because of the endless repetition of such things in various other situations.

"You've made it possible for us to have a full manual on how to deal with emergencies."

The homeroom teacher laughed, whether in earnest or out of desperation.

But the strange thing about Seina was that even though he frequently experienced such misfortunes, he had never been in a life-threatening accident, or even in a potentially life-threatening case, he only suffered minor injuries.

Well, usually it was all about potent hits, and a hospitalization like the other day was like a "ground rule double".

"… I don't know why I'm like this."

As customary as a morning greeting, Seina recalled the question he pondered many times since he was a child and stood on the pedals of his bike….

Gakokon, thud.

The feet that should have been on the pedals slipped and Seina was again lying on the ground with the bike.

"Why is this happening ……?"

A few minutes later - Seina's bicycle, which was still running after his fall into the field, spreading a bit of misery to himself and the passersby around him, came to a stop just before a certain fork in the road.

"Well, what do I do now?" Seina got off his bike and looked thoughtfully at the two roads.

The route on the right was a level prefectural road. It took longer due to the large detour around the mountain.

In contrast, the path on the left was the way over the mountain. Compared to the detour route, it was only a quarter of the distance, and even considering the uphill climb, it was a significant shortcut.

"That's true, but… I'm screwed."

(If I want to see Kiriko as soon as possible, I should take the route over the mountain without even thinking about it.)

Seina, however, had reason to be hesitant. The route over the mountains to the left had recently been the subject of many strange rumors and spooky stories.

A person claimed to have seen a flying shiny object.

One who heard a roar that suddenly rang out.

One who was suddenly hit by a localized downpour.

A person who had witnessed a deformed specter.

And those who have seen the ghost of a woman flying through the air…

It was truly a parade of bizarre phenomenon experiences.

(I am a person who is always involved in various kinds of misfortunes. If I were to pass through a place like this, I would surely encounter a full course of such strange happenings…)

Such futile certainty was in Seina's mind. He knew his bad luck better than anyone else. That is why he had avoided even approaching this place recently.

But it wasn't limited to Seina. Locals, of course, stayed away from it, and even those who didn't know the rumors instinctively avoided it. He often saw parents telling their children not to come here unless they had a reason, or threatening to throw them on that mountain if they didn't do as they were told. Well, it must be a haunted place that attracted a lot of idiots during summer vacation.

Anyway, this mountain road had now become a kind of sanctuary.

But then Seina thought, (What if it's not?)

He looked up at the sky. The sun was still high. There was no fear of rain.

To reach Kiriko as soon as possible, he should take this route.

No, he should go the other way.

It felt like a self-imposed ordeal to meet Kiriko for the first time in six months.

Women in love are strong, but men in love also have guts. Well, they tend to be a bit unemotional, but there is also the story of the skeevy… excuse me, gutsy man who swam across several kilometers of ocean for the woman he was in love with. Even if it was a story about a dog, he was a man, and now Seina was in the same situation.

(I'm going this way for Kiriko's sake.)

Drunk with such a vow of self-satisfaction, Seina turned his bicycle toward the mountain road thick with trees.

"I used to come here a lot, … Tenchi-senpai, how are you?"

Tenchi was Masaki Tenchi, a boy two years older than Seina who lived at the foot of the shrine on this mountain. He was a relative of Kiriko and Kai's, "Masaki family," in other words. Because of this, Tenchi, Kai, and Seina used to play around this area where the Masaki Shrine was located.

Like Kiriko and the other Masaki's, Tenchi, without exception, suffered from Seina's misfortunes, but he never avoided him. However, as they grew older and their activities

expanded, they gradually began to play together less and less.

It was not that he avoided Seina's bad luck, but as he got older, he started to play with friends of the same age and school year. The same was true for Seina, and Tenchi's move to Kurashiki was also a major factor. And for the past two years, since Tenchi went to high school, they only met when he came back to his hometown.

(By the way, Tenchi-senpai, I heard you quit high school after all… that? Come to think of it, all kinds of rumors about this road have been going around since senpai came back…?)

Pedaling hard, he thought.

(I haven't seen him in a while, maybe I should ask him about the strange phenomenon here. Tenchi-senpai might know something about it. Or maybe he'll just smile and say) …

"Well, I don't know."

(I wonder if he'll be able to dodge such a question.)

"Well, how could senpai know all that or… is it just a coincidence?"

As he pondered this, the landscape around him changed from forest to field.

This area was Tenchi's family farmland.

First, the carrot fields.

Next, a carrot field.

More carrot fields, and carrot fields, and carrot fields, and carrot fields, and carrot fields…

"Why all these… carrots?"

If you looked, you would see that most of the fields that were spread out before you were carrot fields.

(Do you think they are all for sale?) Seina nodded his head a little.

"I'm pretty sure that senpai wasn't a farmer…"

(I'll have to ask Tenchi-senpai about this someday.) Just as he was thinking this, he felt an unpleasant vibration coming from the rear wheel of my bicycle.

Katatata gogugagugagugagu.

The unevenness of the ground echoed through Seina's body.

Apparently, he had a flat tire.

"… I guess that even if you take shortcuts, this is what ends up happening."

Muttering these words, Seina opened the toolbox on the back of his bicycle. Flat tires, broken brake cables, and chain breaks were common occurrences for him, so he always carried a full range of tools for repairing them.

In the case of a tire puncture, simply pull the tube, find the hole, and plug it with a rubber patch. Once you get used to it, it is not so difficult. However, to find the hole, he needed to soak the tube in water.

The best place to find water in this area was the large pond in front of Tenchi's house.

Seina parked his bike at the end of the street and headed toward the Masaki house.

"It's a much bigger house now."

He muttered to himself as he looked at the exterior of the house, which was different from the one he'd seen before.

When he was in elementary school playing with Tenchi, it was still just a small one-story house.

"And… that's an unusual gatepost."

He looked at a log with an unfamiliar pattern painted on it.

"I see, this is it. … That Shinohara guy was making a big deal about them 'talking'."

He recalled that one of his classmates who used to work as a part-time newspaper delivery boy used to go around saying that.

"I remember that was the first strange encounter. … It's probably got an intercom or something in it. … Oh, no, I shouldn't. I have to hurry."

Seina stepped to the front door, which had been completely transformed.

It was not unusual for old houses in the countryside to be rebuilt or remodeled. The tree in the yard, a reminder of the times Tenchi, Kai, and he climbed and played together, dimmed the sense of discomfort of the larger house.

"Tenchi senpai, this is Yamada Seina. Hello."

He called out, but there was no answer from inside the house. The front door was open, but judging from the atmosphere, it appeared that they were not home.

(I just need to get some water from the pond, so that's okay.)

With this in mind, Seina took the plastic bucket he had brought with him and headed to the pond.

The water of the pond was cold and clear, and sunlight reflected off the mirror-like surface.

Just as he bent down to fetch some water, a ripple spread out from the center of the pond.

“?”

Seina looked around, feeling a sense of discomfort.

“Huh?”

The cicadas, which had been chirping noisily up to now, were no longer heard.

“It’s dangerous.”

He heard someone’s voice.

“What?”

He looked around, but no one was there.

“Evacuate quickly.”

But a tremor in the air shook Seina’s skin, and a roar from above drowned out the voice.

“!”

At the moment Seina reflexively looked up at the sky, an invisible shock hit his whole body.

Boooooooooom.

A huge wave engulfed Seina, instantly dragging him into the pond.

(Ki, Kiriko!)

With a shock, he almost fainted.

What came to Seina’s mind was Kiriko’s smiling face.

“……?”

He didn’t know how much time had passed since then… Seina was pulled back from the deep darkness by the indescribably good smell and the soft stimulation against his mouth.

The feeling that someone was there beside him.

“Did you notice?”

(Whose voice is it? I still can’t think straight. Where am I? I remember something like this from my childhood.)

While playing with Tenchi and Kai, Kiriko took care of Seina who had almost drowned in the

pond.

Kiriko was kind even then.

(She held me gently. She warmed me gently.)

From that hazy consciousness, a sense of reality gradually returned.

(Okay, I fell into a pond while trying to get water. Did Kiriko help me again?)

He searched for the figure in his foggy mind and there she was.

“Kiriko sa…?”

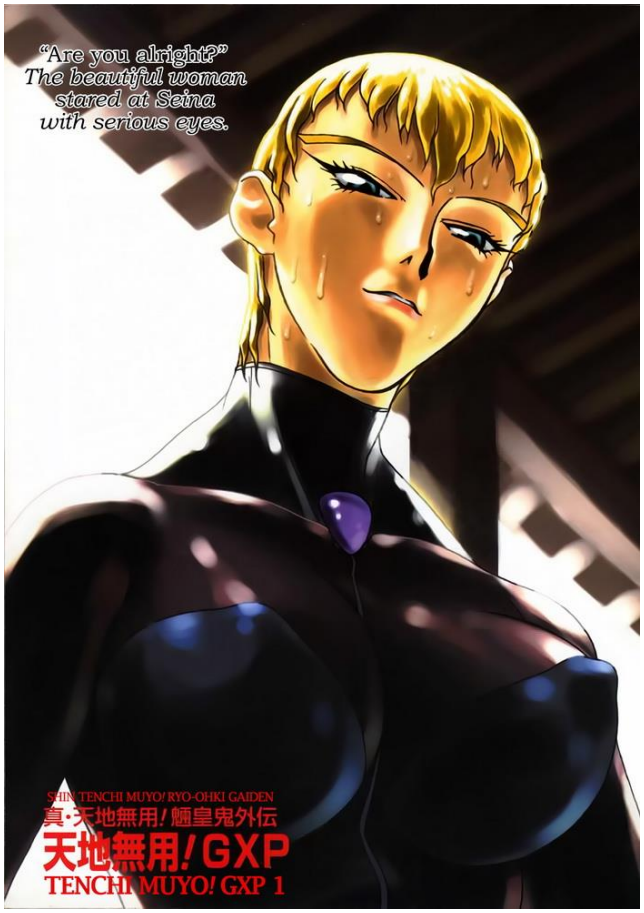
No, it wasn’t.

It was a woman with a gentle smile, but it wasn’t Kiriko.

Short haircut, blue eyes. And she was extraordinary good looking. She was a gorgeous woman who looked like a foreign model, completely different from Kiriko, who exuded a Japanese atmosphere.

“……”

A woman you would only see in magazines and on TV… or perhaps even surpassing them, was right in front of him.



“… A dream…?”

Seina’s mind was still unable to recognize that this was a reality.

“Are you alright?”

“Is this…? Oh, is this Tenchi-senpai’s place?”

Seeing Seina finally grasp the situation and raise himself up, the woman smiled in relief.

“I’m glad to see that you’re all right. I was worried when you didn’t wake up.”

“I’m sorry. I guess I was saved…”

When Seina nodded, red up to his earlobes, the woman breathed a huge sigh of relief and began to speak as if a dam had burst.

“No, no, I’m sorry! I expected there to be a landing beacon. Then I panicked and slammed on the brakes, but I never thought there would be someone below me!”

Bam bam, she hit Seina on the shoulder as if they were male friends.

“What…?”

Seina was taken aback by her bold manner of speaking, which didn't match her appearance, and he couldn't understand what she was saying.

“Oh my gosh, I was so worried! I was sweating buckets. When I saw you floating in the pond, I thought, ‘Oh no, he might have drowned!’ So I jumped in without thinking, and now my clothes are soaking wet... But you don’t have a scratch on you. You’re so tough! Maybe Tenchi has been training you really hard? You’re covered in bruises!”

The woman traced Seina’s body with her finger.

“!”

Her ample breasts flashed before Seina’s eyes as he backed away, jerking as if touched by an electric current. A 15 year old boy could not remain calm at the sight of her fragrant and sexy breasts.

“I’m sorry, do you know Tenchi-senpai?” Seina said, hiding his crotch with her hands, trying not to let the woman know, but the woman continued to speak, completely oblivious to his sad resistance.

"Ah, but if you didn't even get a scratch from that shock wave, is this just collateral damage from Ryoko-san or Aeka-sama? Even so, if you were caught up in a fight between those two and only suffered this much..."

The woman suddenly began to ponder something and fell silent, a complete change from her earlier boisterousness.

The only sounds in the silence were the cicadas, which had somehow resumed their chirping, and the occasional tinkling of wind chimes.

“… Ah.”

When the silence became unbearable, Seina discovered that he was lying on top of a jacket that seemed to belong to her.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t realize!”

Quickly, Seina brushed the dirt off her jacket and offered it to her.

“Huh? Oh, don’t worry about it. It’s more like…”

The woman moved her face close to Seina’s.

Her short, soft hair fluttered in the wind, and her sweet scent tickled Seina's nostrils.

"Wha- What… what is?"

Puzzled by this sudden action, Seina's heart raced at the thought of having such a beautiful face so close to his.

The woman stared intently at Seina's face, her smile never faltering.

Seina's heart beat faster and his breathing became labored.

(… maybe…)

A normal boy would have positive expectations of what was to come. In other words, private lessons, private lessons, and more private lessons with an older woman. But for Seina, who was a bundle of bad luck, such a situation was, needless to say, a first for him. Moreover, the other party was a beautiful woman who looked like a foreign model. At the very least, there was no way he could come to the conclusion that she liked him.

(… This woman, I don't know why, but maybe she's angry?)

In other words, that was the "conclusion" that played out in Seina's mind. Regardless of the reason, if you are angry, you should apologize. This was also a remedial measure that Seina has developed based on his childhood experience, so as not to magnify his bad luck.

"Oh, um, …… sorry ……"

"You, do you want to join the GP?"

As Seina opened his mouth in confusion, the woman stopped him.

"What…?"

(GP? I didn't know what she's were talking about. What does it stand for? What the heck is going in?)

Without a moment's pause, the woman continued speaking.

"I think you could do it, because in the GP you can get all kinds of technical licenses while getting paid, and you have a good benefits package…"

The woman glanced at Seina's body.

"I mean, you got caught up in a fight between those two and that's all you got, right? So it's definitely better than being here!"

"Um, I don't really understand what you're saying, but aren't you angry?"

"……I don't understand what you're saying either."

"Huh."

“Well, whatever. Read this for a detailed explanation.”

With that, the woman pulled out a pamphlet-like item from the stack of papers she was carrying under her arm, handed it to Seina, and stood up.

“Wait, um, I don’t… understand this stuff.”

Just as he was about to speak, an alarm sounded from the woman's wristband.

“Oh no, it's already this late! I'm sorry, but could you give this to Tenchi for me?”

The woman handed Seina a package that she had been carrying separately from the bundle of documents.

“Well then, give my regards to Tenchi.”

The woman gave a quick salute and ran off, then turned around as if she had just remembered something.

“Oh, I almost forgot. When you get into the GP, you have to tell them that you were referred by Amane Kaunaq. The referral points are worth a lot.” The she winked.

“Excuse me!”

The moment Seina tried to call out to her, hoping to get a better explanation, an unpleasant screeching sound filled the surroundings again.

“……!”

He instinctively shut his eyes tightly.

When the noise and wind stopped and he cautiously opened his eyes, the woman was nowhere to be seen.

All that was left was a package addressed to Tenchi and a pamphlet.

“……Amane-san, is that her name…?”

But then Seina thought. (There were two sudden roars. And then Amane suddenly disappeared. This too could be the supernatural phenomenon that people had been rumored to hear.)

But the pamphlet and the package he had been given were both still here.

Was it real? Or…

As he thought this with a straight face, a bashful smile formed on his face as he remembered Amane’s beautiful smile. Strangely, even if it was a supernatural phenomenon, he wasn’t scared.

…… By the way, that “voice” he heard just before he fell into the pond had vanished from his

mind, and he never remembered it again. An old man’s voice or a beautiful woman’s big boobs! It goes without saying which was the more important memory.

“Now then.”

Leaving the package addressed to Tenchi on the veranda, Seina filled the plastic bucket floating on the pond with water.

He put a note on the package so Tenchi would know when he returned.

Meeting Amane had cost him a lot of time.

“I have to get to Kiriko’s as soon as possible!”

After quickly and skillfully repairing the flat tire, Seina jumped back into the saddle and raced down the mountain road at maximum speed…

“Ahhhhhhhhh!”

… Actually, he fell.

“Ow…”

Dragging his broken bicycle down the mountain, the Masaki house soon came into view.

If he had known this would happen, he would have taken the detour, which would have gotten him there much faster, but that's just hindsight. If he had chosen that route, he would have encountered some other misfortune, and considering the average arrival time for the detour route, it wasn't that much of a loss.

… Well, as far as “Yamada Seina” was concerned, it was perfectly acceptable.

As Seina was walking along thinking this, he noticed a black-haired woman sweeping in front of the Masaki family gate. Even from a distance, her standing figure was strikingly beautiful.

“… Kiriko-san.”

With a flood of emotions, Seina called out the woman's name—Kiriko.

Kiriko slowly lifted her head and gazed tenderly at Seina.

“Welcome, Seina-chan. It’s been awhile. I’m glad to see you’re doing well.”

Unsurprised by Seina’s battered appearance, Kiriko smiled at him.

Seina responded with a sincere smile, as if all his past misfortunes and hardships had been swept away.

“Repair, repair, shuri shuri repair ♪”

In the Masaki family’s garden, Kai was repairing Seina’s broken bicycle while humming an off-key tune. Just like Seina repairing a flat tire, his skills were impressive enough to put a professional to shame.

He’d known Kai for over ten years, ever since he started kindergarten.

For Seina, he was probably his only best friend. He had other friends, but he was so unlucky. It was inevitable that they kept their distance from him for fear of getting involved. Kai, however, was the only one who didn’t seem to mind.

Well, Kai was certainly an easy-going person by nature. But he felt there was more to it than that.

Considering that his sister Kiriko also showered Seina with affection, this may be something that came from the Masaki family. In fact, neither Tenchi from the main family nor the residents of Kai’s village have ever shunned Seina.

It was a comfortable place.

"Sorry, as always."

“You really do break things in ways that are worth fixing.”

As he said this, Kai skillfully manipulated a wrench and a screwdriver.

“Great! Complete!”

“What do you mean, complete?”

“Your bike finally has no original parts left.”

“You’re kidding me…!?”

“And so, the Kai original bike is born!”

As Kai said this, he lightly patted the repaired bike with a look of delight.

Kiriko’s voice called out to Seina, who was smiling wryly at the situation, which was hard to describe, but was filled with emotion.

“Seina, come over here. I’ll treat your wound.”

“Y-yes, please.”

Seina went to the veranda from the garden and sat a little distance away from Kiriko. He was too shy to sit right next to her.

“It’s awkward if we’re so far apart.”

Laughing, Kiriko closed the distance herself.

Her long black hair fluttered in the breeze.

As Seina gazed at her expression and gestures, he suddenly thought of Amane.

(Now that I think of it… I was so close to her…)

He remembered Amane's smile and glossy lips.

Seina once again realized how close he had been to a strange woman.

"What's wrong?"

Kiriko looked at Seina curiously, noticing his slight change.

"Uh, no, it's nothing…"

Speaking carelessly like when he was a child, Seina quickly tried to erase the image of Amane from his mind. He was with Kiriko now. It would be rude to her to be thinking about Amane, whom he had just met.

More than anything, he didn't want Kiriko to notice what had happened earlier.

Soon, gauze soaked in disinfectant was placed on Seina's elbow.

"……!"

"You can take it. You're a boy, aren't you?"

Saying this gently, Kiriko wiped the dirt from the wound and disinfected it.

He could feel Kiriko's warmth, just like before.

Even though he hadn't seen her in six months, Kiriko hadn't changed at all - and that made Seina happy.

"Oh, here too."

After treating his elbow and wrist, Kiriko next placed gauze on his cheek.

Seina himself didn't notice, but he must have cut himself somewhere.

Perhaps it was when he fell on the mountain path.

While he was thinking this absentmindedly, Kiriko's hands stopped treating him.

"……?"

A look of confusion he hadn't seen much before.

And then a smile of relief.

“……I see. That’s good, Seina.”

“Wh-what is?”

Kiriko put a bandage on Seina’s cheek and moved her finger to his mouth.

“This.”

“What is this…?”

"You don't have to be shy. I'm really happy for you, Seina, you're a good boy, but I was so worried about you because you don't have good luck."

Kiriko put the first aid kit away and stood up. Seina was still confused.

“Um, I really don’t know what’s going on…!”

“Here, a mirror. Take a good look.”

At Kiriko’s urging, who was giggling, Seina peered into the dressing table mirror in the corner of the room.

His face was the same as always. His hair was cut short. A bandage had just been put on.

And the faint hint of lipstick remained on his lips…

“What is this?!” He couldn’t help but cry out, and at the same time, memories came back to him.

When he had woken up from a faint shock at Tenchi’s house, he had felt a soft sensation on her lips.

(That was, I mean, no way!)

Seina’s face grew hot, and goosebumps broke out all over his body. Of all people, Kiriko had mistakenly thought that he had found a girlfriend.

Quickly wiping his mouth, he stood up and followed Kiriko.

“Um, Kiriko, this isn’t right! There was a stranger earlier!”

“There’s no need to be embarrassed. Seina-chan is at that age. But do you think it’s ok to leave the love bite on?”

“Kiriko-san, listen to me for a second, this has nothing to do with this…”

“I see, hehe, that Seina-chan… Is she a girl from your class?”

“Well, you see…”

“She’s wearing lipstick, so I guess she’s around high school age?”

“Kiriko-saaan.”

“That’s right. It’s not a celebration, but we’ve got our first watermelon of the season. I’ll cut it up now, so wait a minute.”

With that, Kiriko winked and disappeared into the kitchen.

“Kiriko… I…”

Kai was standing behind Seina, who was slumped in despair, having approached him without him realizing it.

“It’s pointless. You know that she won’t listen when she’s like that.”

That was true. Kiriko certainly had a tendency to not listen to others when she was convinced.

Once, when Kai was little, she assumed that Seina had been “bullied” after he had an unlucky fall. No matter how much Kai told her it wasn’t true, she didn’t listen and went to a boy in the neighborhood to make him apologize.

“… So, who was it?”

“You don’t listen to people either.”

“I’m listening to you right now…So, who was it?”

“A guest delivered something to Tenchi-senpai’s house.”

“How can you get a kiss mark from just that?”

He moved closer to Seina.

“Hey, tell me. Is this something you can’t even tell me?”

Astonished by Kai’s curious entertainment reporter-like attitude, Seina told him everything that happened at Tenchi’s house, without holding anything back.

He had fainted from some kind of shock.

When he woke up, he had been helped by a strange woman.

It seemed that the woman had put lipstick on Seina’s lips…

“…Huh.”

“What’s with those eyes?”

Kai looked at Seina with pitying eyes.

“This isn’t a fairy tale, you were saved and kissed and woken up? Since when have you been a sleeping beauty? Huh?”

“I’m not lying! What’s the point of lying about something like this?”

“I can’t believe it. There’s no way something good could happen to you!”

“You don’t listen to what other people say… you’re just the same.”

“Now tell me!”

“Stop it already! I’ve got the pamphlet as proof…!”

Then he suddenly realized.

The pamphlet he was given, and the bag he put it in, were gone.

He wasn’t particularly interested in the pamphlet, but it was essential to give a proper explanation to Kiriko. Without it, the events of earlier would have ended up being nothing more than a delusion.

Seina clicked his tongue. Apparently, he left it on the side of the road when he fixed the flat tire.

Seina slumped his shoulders and continued helplessly.

“… Anyway, I fainted, fell into the pond, and almost drowned.”

“Fell into the pond…? Ah, I see, not a kiss, but artificial respiration! Right, yeah, I see, that makes sense! I see, I see, I guess so, what a relief.”

Apparently, he believed things that were unfortunate instantly… He burst out laughing with a look of genuine relief.

“What's so reassuring about that?”

"Well, whatever it is, you should explain it to my sister tomorrow. She's like that now, but she'll probably listen to you after she's had time to calm down."

“I know that, but…”

At that moment, Kiriko came in, humming and carrying a tray of watermelon.

Seina gave up on making excuses for the time being and gratefully accepted the watermelon Kiriko had cut for him.

“Huh? Kiriko, your finger.”

Seina noticed that Kiriko’s finger, holding the tray, had a bandage that wasn’t there before.

“It’s okay. It’s not a serious injury. More importantly, this year’s watermelons are really

good."

"Let's eat."

Kai quickly reached for the watermelon on the tray.

"Here you go, Seina."

Kai bit into the watermelon with his right hand and offered Seina's his share with his left.

"Thanks… Let's eat."

As he ate the watermelon, he looked at Kiriko's face. The reason for her happy expression was probably due to the lipstick on Seina's face. But at this point, Seina had no way of clearing up that misunderstanding.

His reunion with Kiriko after a long time ended with a subtle sweetness like the first watermelon of the season.

"Thank you for stopping by."

Seina politely thanked Kiriko and started on his way back along the dark road.

Night fell early in the mountains. It only felt that way because the sun was setting behind the mountains and casting a large shadow on the mountain slope, but the sadness of it all weighed heavily on Seina right now.

"Please say hello to your girlfriend."

Those words, spoken with a smile, weighed heavily on him.

She believed that spring has come for Seina, whom she loved like a younger brother. Kiriko must be happy for him as if he were her own brother. However, this was not good for Seina.

If he took the pamphlet he received from that woman, Amane, and explained everything from the beginning, Kiriko would surely understand. No, she must understand. It would be too painful to keep her misunderstanding and not see her for another six months or a year.

That's why Seina started riding his bike along the mountain road, which was getting darker and even more eerie. Just like when he came, his feelings for Kiriko outweighed his fear of encountering a supernatural phenomenon.

"…Thank goodness, there it is."

Perhaps because no one had passed by, the bag containing the pamphlet was lying on the side of the road.

If only he had remembered to take it with him, he wouldn't have had any trouble.

Smiling wryly at his pitiful state, Seina brushed the dirt off his bag, put it in the front basket of his bike, and got back on.

“!”

… It was at that moment.

Between the trees growing on the side of the road, he saw a white shadow flying unsteadily!

“!?! … Aaaaaaaaa!”

The thing that glowed faintly was definitely in the shape of a person. It was a female ghost, one of the supernatural phenomena rumored to occur on mountain roads.

“… I didn’t see that. I didn’t see anything…”

He somehow managed to convince himself of this and started pedaling his bike with a frightened look on his face. The white shadow was about to pass by Seina without disappearing.

“I didn’t see anything, I didn’t see anything, I didn’t see anything, I didn’t see anything, I didn’t see anything, I didn’t see anything!”

Screaming, Seina rode down the dimly lit mountain path at breakneck speed.

Actually, it would be more accurate to say that he slid down the mountain just like when he came.

The bicycle, which had the words "Kai Original Super Special Great Bike" painted on it, sadly only lasted a few hours after it was repaired.

After that, he somehow managed to get home, and after a quick bout of heatstroke and almost drowning in the bath, he had a full meal, and by the time the after-dinner socializing was over, he had calmed down and picked up the pamphlet again.

The green plastic cover had the logo “GP” written on it in gold letters.

“That’s quite an elaborate design.”

Despite falling so far down the mountain path, there wasn’t even a scratch on the surface. Although Seina himself didn’t realize it.

When he opened the pamphlet, there was a retro-style sci-fi illustration that looked like the box art of a model from a generation or two ago.

"—GP, it is the heroes of the universe! A righteous group of peacekeepers!"

“Gather together, young people! For the sake of the galaxy!”

“Join the team and become popular with the opposite sex!”

Such catchphrases were printed on the page.

“What is this?”

It was no wonder that Seina blurted that out.

“It’s like an advertisement pamphlet for a movie or an amusement park attraction… and it looks low-budget.”

So that woman Amane must have been a campaign girl. It wasn’t entirely clear why she was at Tenchi’s house, though…

“What’s that?”

Yoshiko leaned forward, probably bored with the TV.

“It looks like a pamphlet advertising a movie or an attraction.”

“Hmm. Have you seen it?”

“No, I just got the pamphlet advertising it.”

“GP, you say? I’ve never heard of it before…”

After cleaning up after dinner, Kyoko, their mother, joined them and started flipping through the pages of the pamphlet.

“I don’t really get it, but it doesn’t seem like a very good movie.”

“But maybe they did it on purpose. Retro stuff is popular right now.”

As they continued reading, something suddenly caught Seina’s attention.

It was a section for writing down names and addresses.

“Those who want to join, please fill out the necessary information, it says.”

“What is this…?”

“It’s probably part of the advertising. It’s a common thing.” Yoshiko said, sounding exasperated.

In other words, it was probably a way to let people experience the “whatever squad” from the movie in real life under the name of recruiting members, or a fan club or something.

“Well, it’s pretty cliché, isn’t it?”

“Why don’t you apply? You’re not doing any club activities anyway, and you’re bored.”

“Okay, that’s just silly…”

Even though he said that, Seina was somewhat curious about it.

He was vaguely thinking that if he could “join” it and help promote the movie, he might be able to meet that woman named Amane again.

(No… wait a second)

Seina thought. If he could help promote it and get a movie ticket, he might have an excuse to invite Kiriko.

“—Hello, Kiriko-san”

“Oh, you’re going to invite me to the movies, Seina-chan? I’m so happy”

“Actually, I helped promote it”

“Really? That’s amazing, Seina-chan!”

“Haha, I’m embarrassed!”

… Before he knew it, Seina had grabbed a ballpoint pen and was busily writing his name and address in the “Want to Join” column.

(If this clears up the misunderstanding… maybe!)

The more unhappy reality was, the happier he was in his head - although he quickly returned to reality...

When he looked at it after he’d finished writing, he noticed that the large space below the column was vaguely flickering in the shape of a palm. (I wonder if they were using special ink.)

“What is this?”

“Doesn’t it mean that I should place my palm on it?”

“It’s kind of… creepy.”

The palm-shaped light continued to flicker as they watched.

It wasn’t that.

But something he couldn’t explain in words was holding him back. It was his highly developed defense instinct… or perhaps even a precognitive ability, that Seina had developed over a life full of misfortune.

(…But, but, but…)

Seeing Seina hesitate, Kyoko smiled as if she has found something amusing.

“What are you doing? Come on, just put your hand on it!”

“Hey, wait a minute, mom!”

Suddenly, in the six-tatami Japanese-style room, a fierce battle broke out between Kyoko, who grabbed Seina’s hand and tried to place it on the pamphlet, and Seina, who desperately resisted. Seina was quite strong for his age, but Kyoko, who carried several cases of canned food and bottled beer every day, was also strong. Yoshiko was amused by the back-and-forth offensive and defensive play, and cheered her on.

“Don’t be scared, look at me, Seina!”

“I told you I don’t want to!”

“Mom, do your best! Big brother doesn’t matter!”

“What’s that?!”

When Seina pushed, Kyoko pushed back, and when Kyoko pushed, Seina pushed back.

More than just putting his hand on the pamphlet, it had become a show of pride between mother and son.

“Help me, Dad!”

If two women teamed up, he had no choice but to ask a man for help. But that dependable father interrupted Seina's expectant gaze with the newspaper he was reading.

… That was the deciding factor.

The cushion he was bracing himself on slipped, and Seina lost his balance and put his hand on the pamphlet himself.

“I won!”

“Mom, you’re strong!”

Ignoring the women who were celebrating, Seina looked at the pamphlet with a look of resentment.

The print of Seina’s hand was still vividly visible in the space.

Even if he had a strong defense instinct, the people around him would ignore it. That was often the reason for his misfortune.

“…Geez…”

With a big sigh, Seina went up to his room on the second floor with the pamphlet in hand.

Setting aside the movie called GP, Seina thought in his room.

(I have to go back to Kiriko tomorrow and somehow make her understand. I don't have a girlfriend. There was no way I could have a girlfriend.)

It wasn't very cool to insist on something like this, but he had to clear up the misunderstanding anyway. Kiriko was the only one he didn't want to be misunderstood by.

"… But how can I explain it to her…?"

He lay in bed and tried to simulate all sorts of possibilities and countermeasures.

But there weren't many options.

"… In the end, I guess I just have to be honest."

He considered distorting the story a little and saying that they definitely hadn't kissed, but it would be best to just tell her the truth and what he remembered.

"Drowning and receiving artificial respiration is the most convincing way…"

After all, Kiriko knew everything about him since he was a child. There was no point in trying to save face now… it would only lead to further misunderstandings.

"…But she'll be disappointed…"

He remembered Kiriko's happy face.

"No, no! If she continues to misunderstand…"

(We'll remain sister and brother forever. That means, how should I put it… it's a problem.)

A problem, was a problem.

—Whatever the case, Seina changed his mind.

Even if it was just to make an excuse, he would be able to see Kiriko again tomorrow. Just knowing that made Seina's heart leap.

"Kiriko-san…"

Before long, forgetting about Amane, the pamphlet, and the "GP," Seina fell into a peaceful sleep while thinking of Kiriko.

—Seina was dreaming—

He was riding his bike to Kiriko's house.

Unusually, he hadn't fallen even once. He hadn't encountered any strange phenomena.

Thanks to that, he was able to pass through the gates of the Masaki house much earlier than expected.

“Kiriko-san!”

He saw Kiriko sweeping the garden as usual.

“Good for you, Seina-chan!”

“What?”

“Now I can go home in peace.”

Before he knew it, Kiriko was getting ready to go home and was walking away.

“Kiriko-san!”

Someone grabbed Seina’s arm as he tried to chase after her.

“Ah, Amane-san?”

“Let’s be happy.”“

“Please let me go! Kiriko-san!”

He tried to forcefully shake off Amane’s arm, but he couldn’t move. Meanwhile, Kiriko was getting further and further away.

“Wait! … What!?”

As Kiriko was getting further away, a man’s shadow suddenly appeared beside her.

“Kiriko-san… who is that person?”

It was his worst nightmare.

Kiriko was beautiful and kind, and stood out in the neighborhood from an early age.

She was loved by not only Seina but also many male students. But there was no talk of her dating anyone, and in fact, no matter how good the person was, Kiriko showed no interest at all.

“She is possessed by an evil spirit.”

Such rumors circulated - of course, the evil spirit was Seina.

Many male students tried to exorcise Seina, but they all failed… or rather, they were caught up in Seina’s misfortune.

But now that she was far away, there was no way she couldn’t find a boyfriend in Tokyo — it was what Seina feared the most.

“Kiriko-san …… me ……”

“I hope you’ll be happy”

And with that, she disappeared into the arms of the man.

“Kiriko-san!”

“Come on, Seina-kun… let’s go too.”

Amane smiled. The smile of her extraordinary beauty was devilish.

“Come on… let’s go…”

Amane snuggled up to him.

“…Amane…san.”

Seina was overcome with goosebumps.

“Let’s go… to the GP!”

When the dream ended, Seina remained in a light sleep for a while.

A rustling sound and the sensation of goose bumps.

The body heat of someone nearby.

Although it felt strange, he was clearly in his own bed.

—A dream?

The familiar feel and smell of the futon.

(…I see… it was a dream. …thank goodness)

He rubbed the sweat from his forehead against the pillowcase and tried to follow the lingering sensation of sleepiness… but the feeling that had taken over from the… dream remained.

It seemed that someone was stroking his short-cropped head. The rustling sound and goosebumps were the result of that sensation.

“Um…… it’s …… already.”

He tried to brush the hand off his head, but it started stroking him again.

It seemed likely that it was his mother or Yoshiko who had come to wake him up.

“Let me sleep for another five minutes…”

As he said this, he slightly opened his still hazy eyes.

“… Huh?”

He sat up suddenly.

…… It was not anyone from the family, not Kiriko, and certainly not Amane.

Blonde hair, brown skin and beautiful blue eyes.

A warm, soft smile that was enough to leave anyone speechless.

She was wearing what could be interpreted as an apron and was holding a cleaning mop in one hand.

A beautiful woman and a complete stranger, yet a foreign woman so brimming with familiarity that it was almost impossible to describe.

“Good morning.”

“…Good morning.”

“Hehe.”

“……”

This is what it meant to be astonished.

In Amane’s case, he was able to understand the situation immediately. There was something very strange about the fact that this woman was there.

But even though a strange woman was sitting on his bed, he didn’t feel any discomfort.

There was an atmosphere that made it seem natural that she was there, but it was clearly visually unnatural.

(Do I have amnesia?)

Right, something like that? The other party knew him, but he didn't know himself - as usual, he had some kind of accident and lost his memory... it was more natural to think of it that way.

(For now, in times like these, you need to understand the situation...)

—This is my bed.

—The pillow and futon look familiar.

—For now, I don’t have any injuries or pain anywhere.

—But I don’t recognize the woman in front of me.

—And why is she patting my head?

(Then I’ll expand my search area.)

Thinking about this, Seina began to look around the bed. Looking more closely, the ceiling and walls weren’t from his room either.

(I see, it’s a hospital room… But it does seem like a strange hospital room.)

“…Um, why is my bed in a hospital?”

It seemed that his mind was finally starting to work - the woman continued to stroke Seina’s head with a smile.

——The quickest thing to do would be to find out what happened.

“…Um, who are you…?”

Smiling and smiling.

“Um, where is this…”

Smiling and smiling.

(It must be a dream after all. It’s just a dream!)

Seina brushed the woman’s hand off, pulled the covers over his head, and closed his eyes tightly.

(One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.)

He counted in his mind and woke up with a start.

“…”

But the situation hadn’t changed at all.

This still wasn’t his room, and the unfamiliar woman was still smiling.

He pinched his right cheek… (It hurts.)

The woman saw this and pinched Seina’s left cheek with a smile… (It hurts.)

“Is this fun?”

“No, it just hurts…”

(This isn’t a dream. It’s reality.)

He didn’t know why she was here, or who this woman was, but it was reality.

Just as Seina was beginning to realize this, the woman clapped her hands and announced to someone.

“Onnainin-san, Seina-chan is awake.”

“Eh? How do you know my name…?”

While Seina was even more confused, the door to the room opened silently.

A man dressed in what appeared to be a uniform appeared.

The stranger, with narrow eyes and a timid yet earnest look, called “Onnainin,” gave a slight salute and stood in front of Seina.

“Good morning, Yamada Seina-kun.”

“…Um… Where are we? Who on earth are you people!?”

He asked the man in front of him, who looked like he would be easy to complain too.

“What? …uh…”

After a moment of thought, Onnainin flipped through the documents he had with practiced hands and took out the GP pamphlet.

“Do you recognize this?”

“Yes.”

Seina’s mind flashed with vivid memories of the events with Amane and even his conversations with Kiriko.

“So, is this your written name, address, age, phone number, hobbies, special skills and favorite foods?”

“Yes… it is.”

“Is that your handprint?”

“Yes…”

It was something he had been forced into during his fight with his mother the night before.

“So now you understand. You’ve joined the GP.”

“GP?”

Sure enough, the narrow-eyed, timid-looking but earnest-looking Onnainin said GP.

“Giggle.”

Beside him, the woman, ignoring Seina’s nervousness, continued to stroke his head, perhaps liking his short haircut.

“Um, what on earth is the GP…?”

He started to say that, but stopped. Of course, when he said GP, he was referring to the GP in the pamphlet.

“Let’s stop with the silly questions.”

Anyway, he had gotten himself embroiled in a suspicious event.

“Um…”

Taking someone’s bed while they were asleep was way too much, no matter how you looked at it. Even if it was for advertising purposes, this was still kidnapping.

No, to put it bluntly, it was kidnapping, abduction, and confinement.

Seina calmed himself down and began to speak.

“Um, please let me go home. I’m sure I’m happy to have won a prize for the first time in my life, but I didn’t want to be dragged here all of a sudden.”

“Even if you say that now… the moment you fill this out, it was recognized as your will… and once your parents’ consent was received, it was considered official.”

“… My parents’!?”

“Yes. Seina-kun’s mother said, ‘It’s fine, just take the whole bed while he’s sleeping.’ Apparently, that would cause less damage, but what does that mean?”

“……”

He could easily picture what it was like then.

“That’s right, we’ve also got a message from your family.”

Onnainin said and flicked a switch on his wrist.

Squeal, wooo.

The wall next to him became a screen and a video was projected onto it.

It showed his father, Hokuto, his mother, Kyoko, and Yoshiko standing side by side in front of the Yamada Store.

"… Ah, is it recording yet?"

His father cleared his throat and began to speak in a slightly off-key voice. A typical sign of someone who was not accustomed to being filmed in this way.

"… Seina, you're my son. You've grown up to be a fine man as the eldest son of the Yamada family. Everything's okay now."

(What do you mean by okay?) Seina thought to himself.

"Seina, it's Mom."

"This is Yoshiko."

Seina stared at the screen with his mouth half open.

"… The truth is, we've been trying not to tell you this, but the medical expenses and hospital fees for your injuries are not insignificant… Besides, Yoshiko will be in middle school next year and will need a lot of money, right? Things are starting to show signs of wear and tear at the store, so I've been talking to Dad about what to do every day."

While his Hokuto nodded in agreement, Kyoko continued to speak the truth, something that would normally be sugar-coated, with ruthless directness.

"When you're not at home, the store's sales are good. And you know, you may be unlucky, but you're pretty reliable, aren't you? You'll be fine wherever you go. And you know… I was wondering what to say here, but your homeroom teacher said that the high school has heard the rumors about you is hesitant to let you enroll. Well, high school isn't compulsory education after all. Um, that place… I think it's called GP? The first place you'll go to is called the GP Academy, and they'll give you a basic education, plus they'll pay you a salary and provide medical expenses separately. It's perfect for you. Mom and Dad will have no worries now…"

As she said this, Kyoko casually covered her eyes with a handkerchief.

Her somber attitude caused Onnainin and the woman to sob.

But Seina knew all too well that those tears were ones of joy.

"…What do you mean, everything's okay and you're relieved…?"

Anger welled up inside him.

The fact that he was shunned even at his high school was a bit of a shock, and sure enough, the GP where he was apparently heading would accept him—Even if he gave in and accepted the example of a lion pushing its child into the valley of the lost.

—However. A lion wouldn't push his child into the valley while laughing. In short, it was safe to say that they had conveniently pushed their trouble onto the GP. It was a situation where it was only natural for him to feel angry.

"Well, there's no need to worry about us. Just work hard. You don't have to come home until you've become a big shot. Oh, and don't forget to send money."

Kyoko waved her hand with a big smile as she revealed her increasingly ruthless true feelings.

… Well, from an outsider's perspective, it could be taken as encouragement…

In fact, Onnainin was sobbing next to Seina.

"No, this is no joke! You're going ahead with this without my consent… this is practically human trafficking!"

In a fit of rage, he said to the woman beside him, who was still patting him on the head.

"But you signed the contract, didn't you?"

"Th, that's…"

That was true. The moment Seina filled out the contract, or in other words the pamphlet, his consent was legally confirmed.

"See you, Seina."

"Good luck, Seina."

"See you, big brother."

Along with the smiles of his family, an elaborate end title appeared on the screen, and the footage tracked back to show the store packed with customers, the likes of which Seina had never seen before, and the video ended there.

"… What a family…"

As the screen went blank, Seina stood up with anger in his eyes.

"I'm going home."

"What?" Onnainin asked, his eyes still red and swollen.

"I can't accept this. I'm not some prewar apprentice. Which way is the station?"

He wanted to go home and complain. His mother tried to force him to sign the pamphlet… It was a mistake that he put his hand print on the pamphlet, and he felt a little embarrassed when he saw the store crowded with customers, but…

"No, wait! More than anything, I don't like that happy look on your face!"

Onnainin frowned in confusion as Seina got carried away.

“Even if you say station… that’s a bit difficult.”

“Then a bus stop would be fine.”

“No, that’s fine too…”

“Is this really that rural?”

“No, it’s not.”

“Oh, I see… Well, excuse me, could you just lend me some money for transportation? I’ll pay you when I get home.”

Onnainin was confused by the lack of coherence in their conversation, and the woman spoke to him cheerfully.

“Maybe you don’t know what the GP is, Seina-chan.”

“Isn’t GP a movie or an amusement park attraction?”

Hearing that, Onnainin shook his head vigorously.

“I thought it was strange after all. No matter how you look at it, Seina-kun’s planet is at the early civilization level…”

Finally convinced, Onnainin clapped his hands and turned on the switch on his wrist again.

“?”

Swooosh. At the same time, the sound of a machine operating could be heard above Seina’s head.

The walls and ceiling of the room became transparent in an instant, revealing a huge dome-shaped roof.

The dome slowly opened.

The scenery jumped in through the gap.

Seina looked up and saw…

“…!”

A dark, dark space was reflected, along with countless stars.

“Ah… ah… ah?”

When the dome opened completely, the pitch black of outer space spread out before him.

The Milky Way seemed to cover the entire sky.

A horizon that didn't exist.

Seina could only be stunned by the scene, which was clearly different from that on Earth.

Onnainin smiled.

Seina was in space.

He was certainly in space.

"G is for Galaxy, and P is for Police. It's a police organization run by the Galactic Federation."

"…Galaxy Police… GP…"

It was impossible to ask Seina to think any more than that at the moment.

Chapter Two: Valuable Baggage

A few minutes after hearing the shocking news, Seina was led to the bridge by Onnainin. They were walking together with a woman named Mitoto who was still rubbing his head.

Having finally returned from the depths of shock, a doubt began to form in Seina's mind.

(…Space? No way…)

It was natural to think that. But this resilience in a dazed, sleepy head was due to the resistance to shock that had been cultivated by the bad luck he had suffered up until that point.

He woke up to find himself on a spaceship. And it seemed that it wasn't a dream.

It was a bit… no, quite far-fetched. Once his mind started to function normally, it was only natural that he would sense the presence of some kind of artificiality in this situation.

The inside of the spaceship was a special effects set.

The vast expanse of outer space was a CG image projected on a screen.

Could Onnainin and the woman in question be some kind of actors?

(…This must be an advertisement for a movie or an attraction after all…) Seina told himself.

It made the most sense, if you thought about it logically.

"They even involved my family in this elaborate advertising… They should have spent a little more on the content of the film."

He remembered the retro pictures in the pamphlet. Or maybe it was because the budget was being spent for another reason.

Either way, he couldn't accept being led astray by mere advertising and becoming a spectacle.

He was well aware that he was unlucky. But that didn't mean he needed to go and get into that quagmire.

"I had a bad dream, so… this is…"

Seina's doubts turned into certainty as he followed Onnainin.

"I don't understand what you're talking about… I'm exhausted. Even if you say it's a lie…"

Seina didn't believe him even after being led to the bridge, so Onnainin scratched his head.

"I can't help but think this is a lie. First of all, that gesture feels strangely out of place, and we can communicate with words. But even before that, the probability of aliens evolving exactly like humans is close to zero, and the probability of highly developed intelligent life forms meeting each other is virtually nonexistent."

"The language is understandable because various Nano machines were installed while you were asleep. The appearance and concepts are the result of the Seed Project by a great prehistoric civilization… About 60% of galactic civilizations are like us. And the encounter rate is just because the time scale of the early civilizations is different from ours…"

"……"

"Onnainin-san, it seems like Seina-chan doesn't really understand."

Mitoto pointed at Seina, who had frozen up after trying desperately to understand what he was saying, unable to keep up with the processing.

"…That's a problem."

"Mihoshi told me that when you take the Masaki family into space for the first time, it's easiest to turn off gravity control."

"Mitoto-sama, that's certainly effective, but it's a little dangerous even during normal flight."

"If it's just for a little bit, it'll be fine."

"But…"

The woman called Mitoto spoke gently and without any sense of intimidation, but Onnainin seemed to be very attentive to her.

(What kind of relationship do these two have…?)

If they were acting, it would be interesting to see the roles they were playing, but now's not the time for that. Solving the big problem at hand came first.

"…There's no other way. It's the quickest way to get Seina-kun to believe in us… Alan, please."

"Understood."

The crew member called Alan quickly operated the panel in front of him.

"Oh…!"

In that moment, Seina suddenly lost his balance and nearly fell. He felt as if his body was being shaken vertically, and as if something had tripped him from below. Falling over nothing was one of Seina's special skills, but had it been activated again?

—-But he soon realized that this was not the case.

Instead, his body was floating gently in the air.

"Wah, ah, what!?"

Seina drifted through the air while making meaningless sounds.

It was an unsettling feeling, like his feet were literally not on the ground. No matter how he tried to adjust his position, he just kept spinning around, and soon he no longer knew which was "up". There was no up or down, which was a standard in space, but when that sensation was stripped away, he realized that there was nothing that could be done.

Seina was stunned by the feeling of pure floating, which was completely different from the feeling of floating in water, much less from amusement park rides, as Onnainin passed in front of his eyes without changing a single expression.

"Do you understand now?"

"Um, is this by any chance?"

"This is what they call zero gravity."

"Zero gravity…!"

Seeing was believing. And no explanation was better than experiencing zero gravity.

Seina could not believe that this was virtual or fictional. It was too real, too immediate.

He frantically checked his body. There was no mechanism like being suspended by piano wire.

Another possibility would be creating a state of weightlessness through free fall, but he

hadn’t sensed any unnatural behavior from the craft when he no longer felt gravity, and it had been quite a while since he’d been in this state. That was too long for free fall on Earth. It could also be some kind of drug-induced hallucination or hypnosis, but there was no way to tell at the moment.

But—

(…Is this real…?)

His defensive instincts, finely honed by misfortune, were overcome by his curiosity.

It was a feeling that he couldn’t do anything about.

It could also be artificial. Maybe he was being deceived. But more than anything, Seina’s desire, or curiosity, or hope, or whatever it was, overflowed from the depths of his heart no matter how hard he tried to suppress it.

He wanted to affirm this situation.

That was Seina’s feeling, a vague wish that had been born.

He was in space.

It was a setting that was attractive enough to accept.

As he drifted, he looked around. Seina wasn’t the only one floating. Mitoto, Onnainin, and everything that wasn’t fastened to the bridge were flying up in the air.

The crew members who had fastened their seatbelts also seemed to be floating only due to the amount of slack in their belts.

There was nothing strange within his sight.

There was nothing strange. There was no reason to deny it. So, then…

“Am I… in space?”

The moment he heard his own voice mutter, without reason, reason or logic, Seina’s instincts completely chose “that way”.

He believed it.

(—I’m in space now!)

Universe. Space. The Cosmos. He didn’t know what else, but space.

Space he had encountered countless times in manga, anime, and science fiction novels.

Space was there when he looked up at the night sky, yet it seemed infinitely far away.

And there Seina was standing. Or rather, floating.

Of course, private space travel was far from within reach, and by the time Seina was an adult, or even an old man, it might have become a part of everyday life, but for now it was a place he could only long for from afar. That was the space he existed in.

Kiriko's trip home.

The choice of the mountain route.

The flat tire on his bike.

Meeting Amane.

The pamphlet.

Filling out the application to join.

And then, his family's unanimous consent.

A whole host of coincidences like these — or perhaps they were already inevitable — had led him to drift here. But right now, Seina didn't care about the circumstances or the reasons. His spirit was high from the pleasure of stepping into the space he had longed for.

And yet, he thought. (GP, as Onnainin put it, stands for Galaxy Police.)

It couldn't be helped that the contents of the pamphlet were second-rate. It was common for real-life organizations and government offices to be bad at advertising and PR.

But that wasn't the problem.

"Fight for galactic peace in space!"

What a fascinating phrase for a boy.

Picturing a scene of strong GP members in tight-fitting silver suits firing ray guns at mysterious, squirming octopus-like aliens, Seina gazed out the window in a daze.

…He didn't care what it said, it was in such terrible taste that it didn't qualify him to complain about the GP pamphlets.

A silver suit, an octopus-shaped design, a ray gun!

Anyway, leaving aside the question of lame advertising sense for the moment, despite the good fortune of having come to space, Seina's misfortune and tragedy lay in the fact that the protagonists of his delusion were GP employees and not him. Unlucky Seina had an unconscious habit of not having high expectations for his future.

But, well, whether he was the main character or not, just the fact that he'd "come to space"

was enough for him at the moment.

That was enough to make him feel drunk. He felt completely dizzy.

“Huh?”

“What’s wrong?”

“I feel… sick…”

“Ah, you’re suffering from weightlessness. Alan, control gravity.”

It seemed he hadn’t just imagined feeling dizzy.

Anyway, Seina grabbed onto the nearest spare seat and prepared for a gentle landing.

“We’ll bring you back.”

Gravity returned with a thud, along with the crew’s voice. At the moment he was pulled back to the floor, Seina’s foot got caught on the back of the seat.

“Ah?”

Slam, slam, thud, thud.

At the same time, three sounds rang out. The sounds of Mitoto landing, Onnainin landing, and Seina falling spectacularly onto the spare seat.

“That hurts…”

“Seina, are you OK?!”

Mitoto came running over, worried.

“S-sorry, I’m OK…”

“Thank goodness. You deliberately fell into such a narrow space.”

“Really, I’m sorry.”

Seina stood up with his hands on the panel, being helped up by Mitoto, who stroked his short-cropped head again. His body felt awfully heavy. Although it was only for a short time, 1G was more than he had expected for a body that had experienced weightlessness.

“Ah, Seina. Are you hurt?”

“I’m fine. I’m used to it.”

He was still a little dizzy, but he should be able to manage.

Seina slowly stood up and looked at Onnainin.

He had a gentle smile on his face, but if you looked closely, you could sense a sharpness in his eyes.

It was strange, but until now he'd suspected he might be an actor, but now he looked like "GP's skilled detective, Hotoke no Yama-san" or something. *****Taiyou ni Hoero! Drama, 1972*****

(… Well, I don't know if his name really has the character "Yama" in it, though.)

"Why don't you go back to your room and rest? We'll get to the Academy in a couple of jumps."

"Academy, you say?" Seina asked again. He thought he had heard his mother say the word in the video earlier, but he didn't know what it specifically meant.

"Excuse me. I haven't explained it yet. The Academy is properly called the Galaxy Academy, and it is an area where academic researchers gathers, which could be called the brains of the Galactic Federation. You will be enrolled in one of its constituent institutions, the GP Academy, which is directly under the GP."

"I see," Seina said.

There was no way that an untrained Seina would be suddenly sent to the front lines of the Galaxy Police.

(… Even the police have their own schools.)

They probably wouldn't go through this sort of process in the movies, but it was often the case in reality.

If you thought of it as a replacement for going to high school, it didn't seem like a detour.

However, Seina was more interested in the other thing Onnainin had said.

"By the way, could that …… jump be some kind of warp?" Seina's voice trembled.

When it came to space, warp was essential!

Warp was essential for interstellar travel!

Even people who weren't interested in science fiction had surely heard of it at least once. It was a standard technology in the world of science fiction, which was said to allow you to travel to far-flung parts of space in a single bound. However, in reality, it was considered to be nearly impossible, just like time travel into the past.

—Amazing!

Coming to space was certainly exciting. But, if you wanted to call it that, it was just like going to a restaurant to eat a full course meal. Of course, no one just went into a restaurant and sat there. Of course, food was served there.

It was amazing that he met Mitoto, Onnainin, and the other aliens.

It was amazing to be on a spaceship like this.

But even more dramatic than that, warp was the main dish.

No matter what anyone said, it was still “warp”.

(It’s impossible not to get excited by this…!)

The night before the festival - that’s how he felt.

“Strictly speaking, it’s not a warp, but… it’s similar.”

“I thought so!”

Seina’s breathing became heavier.

Not only had he come to space, he would even get to warp! His resentment towards his family had already vanished into the distance, and he even felt a sense of gratitude towards them for sending him off so readily.

He wasn’t proud of it, but he was simple at heart.

“So, when are you going to do this, not a warp, but a jump?”

“Yes, it’s a long-distance jump… the spatial phase around here seems a bit unstable, so we’ll go a little further first.”

Pushed by Seina’s momentum, Onnainin answered.

“In any case, you should go back to your room and rest first. I’ll call you when we’re going to jump.”

“Absolutely!”

Even if it was just a warp, he could brag to the others in his class and Kai. After all, it was a warp. Seina stepped lightly through the hatch to the passageway.

“Well then, I look forward to working with you…!”

Pshhhh, gazzzzz.

As Seina turned around and bowed to Onnainin and the others, he was caught in a perfect pincer by the hatch.

“No, no, I have to be careful…”

While regretting how he’d gotten so excited about the warp that he’d forgotten about his

own misfortune, Seina was led by Mitoto down the corridor back to his room.

His face, which was pinched, tingled a little.

“Seina, are you okay?”

“Ah, yes. By the way… are you also a GP member, Mitoto?”

He asked her something that had been bothering him. One reason was that Onnainin and the other crew members seemed to be very considerate of her.

But more than anything, Mitoto was happily cleaning with a mop while leading the way. That, along with her laid-back demeanor, didn’t really suit the Galaxy Police.

“Me? Yes. I’m the cleaner.”

“Ah… cleaner?”

(I don’t really understand, but I’m sure cleaners are necessary. If there are people living there, it’s not surprising that they’d have the same arrangements for life as on Earth.)

“But mops… they’re pretty primitive, don’t you just use a machine or something to clean it up?”

“But it’s more fun this way, isn’t it?” She said with a grin.

“… Ah, I see.”

“Ahhhhhhhhh, Mitoto-samaaaaah!”

And then Onnainin came flying up the passageway.

“Cleaning is good! Cleaning!”

He took the mop from Mitoto, turning pale.

“Uh… why?”

“Please! Don’t clean until we get to the Academy.”

“Uhhhhh.”

Mitoto looked at Onnainin with a childlike expression and resentment.

“There are people on this ship who are in charge of cleaning. It would be a shame to take away that person’s job.”

“Huh? …You’re right… Sorry.”

It wasn’t clear to him why cleaning was wrong, but there must have been a good reason. The world was a complicated place, Seina realized.

His unusual understanding was also the result of an accumulation of strange experiences of ‘bad luck’.

Unable to clean, Mitoto walked dejectedly, occasionally stopping to writhe around with her mouth clenched in a frown as if she was holding something back.

“What’s wrong? Are you feeling unwell?”

“You know, there it is, you know.”

The corner of the hallway she pointed to sadly had a slight blackening. But it was only noticeable when she pointed it out.

“Mitoto, you like to be clean, don’t you?”

“The hallway, how pitiful it is that it’s so dirty…”

“Huh?”

As you could guess, Mitoto’s love of cleaning was not based on some kind of egocentric idea of cleanliness, but on a philanthropic (?) principle that she felt sorry for her partner ……, which in this case was a dirty object

Anyway, that just the kind of person she was.

“The hallway, the door, the handle…”

While Seina was concerned about Mitoto, who was walking dejectedly and repeatedly calling things so pitiful and dirty, his steps were light in contrast.

He’d come to space, joined the Galaxy Police, and even experienced warp travel. Seina wasn’t a particularly ardent sci-fi fan, but if he was actually in this situation, it was only natural that any boy would be cheerful.

But…

“Ah!”

After the excitement of space had died down, Seina was reminded of the most important thing of all.

(… I can’t see Kiriko anymore…)

The misunderstanding from yesterday hasn’t been cleared up.

No, now was not the time for that!

Now that he was in space, there was no telling when they’d see each other again.

“At worst, it could be forever…”

Seina grimaced at the thought of being misunderstood for years.

“Mitoto, can we just go back to Earth for a bit? I left something behind.”

“Forgot something?”

“It’s something important!”

“Then, just call Earth and have them bring it over later.”

“No… I don’t mean something… a phone!?”

“Yes. Here.” Mitoto said and pointed to a phone.

Over there…

“… No matter how you look at it, this is a black dial phone…”

In front of Seina was an old black rotary phone. Moreover, the room they were in was clearly a Japanese-style room.

He turned his head to look, and outside the window was definitely space.

(… Is this a set after all?)

A doubt rose in the back of his mind again.

“Um… what is this?”

“Well, first you pick up the phone.”

That was a given.

It was not what Seina wanted to hear, but he picked up the receiver anyway.

“What?!”

The moment he picked up the phone, a floating screen appeared in front of him.

“The other person’s image is displayed here. However, on Earth, since there is no receiver, so they can’t see us.”

“Ah…”

He touched the screen floating in the air. There was a solid object there, and a plate floating in the air. This seemed to be space technology, but when you see something like this, there is no doubt.

“That’s right. To contact Earth, put 4989 at the beginning of the phone number.”

"… 4989 … The four and 8 kinds of suffering…"

× × × BIG GIANT UNSKIPPABLE Translators' note: I have to step in here. Sorry to break your immersion folks. The kanji for 4989 means being in dire distress; being hard put to it, or the four and eight kinds of suffering which is a Buddhist term for the Suffering of being born and living, aging, getting sick, and dying and all 4 of those plus being separated from the ones you love, encountering things you don't like, not getting what you want, and suffering from existing. Basically, he had to dial a super unlucky number that in Japanese represents every kind of suffering. Also, Tenchi GXP takes place in 1993. That's why he doesn't use a cellphone, or call Kiriko's cellphone, or contemplate emailing her. Very few phones or technology ever show up in Tenchi. Usually when it does, they do simple camera phones which they had back then. Remember, Tenchi's Earth doesn't have widespread broadband. Back to the plot. × × ×

The number was a bit strange, but it meant that he could call Kiriko from this room.

However, Kiriko's time at her mom's house was limited. This phone call could be his last chance to clear up the misunderstanding. In other words, this was the final day of Project Kiriko.

Regardless of how concisely he explained the relationship between being in space, having a girlfriend, and the pamphlet and the kiss mark, Kiriko would be surprised if he told her he was working for the Galaxy Police.

Maybe…

"Seina, you've really become a GP detective!"

"Yes, Kiriko. I'll protect the peace of the galaxy and you, Kiriko!"

"I can count on you! I love you, Seina!"

"Kiriko!"

The two shadows overlap. And, oh, there was more…

"… There's no way that could happen. I have a hard time believing it myself, but if I told her I was working for the Galaxy Police…"

"Seina, it'll be fine! Let's go to the hospital together."

“That’s the punchline she’ll say…”

In any case, the most important thing was to clear up Kiriko’s misunderstanding. He’d learned all too well that trying to do too many things at once didn’t always work.

Like the steps of a tortoise, one by one, steadily.

After thanking Mitoto and being left alone in the room, Seina immediately operated the communication system as he had been taught.

He entered the codes for Earth and Japan, then dialed Kiriko’s home number. It was like an international call, so there was no confusion.

Then, without any waiting, it rang.

Ring. Ring. Ring.

His heart beat quickly. This was a different kind of tension compared to calling from home.

Each time it rang, Seina muttered each syllable of Kiriko’s name.

“Ki… ri… ko… sa…”

Click, the call was connected.

“… Hello, this is the Masaki residence.”

Just as he thought it was Kai’s voice, the familiar Masaki household appeared on the communication system monitor.

He didn’t know how it worked, but it seemed to function as a videophone even if the other party didn’t have the equipment. This was space after all.

Kai was exhausted from the heat and was lying down when he answered the phone.

“Hello Kai. It’s me, Seina.”

“…Oh, Seina. You didn’t come to school today, are you in the hospital again?”

Kai laid down and scratched his stomach and thighs. It was so embarrassing.

“Hey, Kiriko always tells you to be a little more dignified.”

“Don’t act like you can see. It’s fine, just let me relax at home.”

“It’s the same at school. Hey Kai, it’s embarrassing to stick your hand in your pants and scratch in front of other people, Kiriko always tells you that.”

“!”

Suddenly, Kai looked around suspiciously.

“How do you know? Where are you watching from? Are you nearby? Maybe…”

Kai stood up and opened the sliding door behind him.

“In here!”

After making sure there was no one there, he moved on to another place.

“Maybe here?”

“… Kai”

“In here!”

“No, listen.”

“Here!”

“I’m not a ninja, so I’m not in the attic.”

Kai’s search area was expanding to more and more ridiculous places.

“I’m not a cat, so I wouldn’t be under the floorboards.”

“You jerk!”

“I’m not the other man, I’m not in the dresser… come on! There’s no way I’d be in a drawer! I’m not in the trash can either!”

“You’re so mean!!”

Under a bunch of magazines, under the low table, behind the TV, and even under the phone. Seina didn’t know how much of it was serious or a gag. In the case of …… Kai, it was the former, which made it even worse.

Eventually, Kai looked tired and breathed heavily in the middle of the room.

“Are you still going? Where next?”

Let’s stick around for a little longer. If it was his usual pattern, he’d be getting bored of it by now.

“If that’s the case, you must be over there!”

Kai said, then dashed out of the living room.

“Geez, Kai… What! What the hell!?”

To his surprise, the image on the screen began to follow Kai as he left the room, as if it were a hand-held camera.

“Amazing… As expected of space technology.”

When he turned the corner of the hallway, Kai seemed to be heading to the kitchen.

“Uh, just so you know, I’m not in the fridge.”

He went ahead and said it anyway.

Sure enough, Kai opened the refrigerator.

“Um, so…”

However, Kai ignored Seina’s voice and took out a standard plastic bottle, opened the cap with his teeth, put his hands on his hips and started to drink.

“Puhhhh~!”

Ignoring Seina who was dumbfounded and speechless, Kai drank it all in one gulp, then carefully placed the bottle into the case next to him. He was surprisingly meticulous in that respect.

“…Have you calmed down?”

“Hey Seina, I know where the key to my sister’s room is.”

“Huh?”

“I’ll tell you where it is, just tell me where you are.”

“…I don’t know what you’re saying.”

“You’re not just talking, I know you can see me.”

“Yeah, I can see you.”

“That’s why I said there are hidden cameras.”

“No!”

“Don’t hide it.”

“No! I told you yesterday too…”

Seina explained the gist of what had happened.

About the pamphlet he’d received from a beautiful woman at Tenchi’s house.

How he’d ended up joining the GP after filling it out as a joke.

And now, how he was in space.

“Isn’t it amazing, Kai?”

“…It’s amazing…yeah, it’s certainly amazing. So you ended up being treated at that hospital too.”

“Come on!”

“Well, take good care of it.”

Given Kai’s condition, any further explanation would be a waste of time.

“That’s enough, just call Kiriko.”

“She’s not here right now.”

“Wha!” Seina froze.

After putting up with Kai’s stupidity for so long, Kiriko wasn’t even there.

“…I knew I was unlucky … Well, I guess it’s too late to state the obvious now. ……Yes! Then let’s try calling my house.”

He should probably complain but he thanked him and hung up.

The moment he dialed 4989, Onnainin’s smiling face appeared on the communication monitor.

“Whoa!!”

“Seina! We’re about to make the jump you’ve been waiting for, so hurry up to the bridge!”

As he walked down the corridor, Seina changed his mind.

On second thought, it was probably a good thing he didn’t talk to Kiriko.

If he said “I’m in space” now, she might not believe him. The discussion with Kai made that clear. It would be more difficult to ask her to believe him.

(It would be better to at least understand a little more about the GP before reporting it. I should try to find some evidence. And it would be embarrassing if I couldn’t answer any questions. It’s okay. I can call after the warp…no, the jump is over. Surely Kiriko would be home by then.) Seina told himself as he entered the bridge.

“03, 04 energy generator output synchronization stabilized.”

“Engine pressurization is good. No abnormalities in internal pressure balance.”

“Hyperspace jump program loaded.”

“Hyperspace jump program activated.”

The operators recited one procedure after another.

This was it! This atmosphere was so cool. What could he say, it was warp-like.

“Energy output, up to 120; 130, 135, 140…”

The space around the GP ship shifted out of phase with normal space and began to twist and became translucent.

“Amazing. It’s warp after all…”

The big shock should be coming soon. Seina happily sat in the seat prepared for him and cinched his seat belt tightly.

“Setting the coordinates. Point G26, 380, NI71…”

“You all need to sit down soon or you’ll be in danger.”

“Ha ha, yes.”

Laughing, Onnainin took the captain’s seat and Mitoto took the seat opposite Seina.

“Program loading complete. 10 seconds left until hyperspace jump begins, 8, 7, 6…”

Seina swallowed.

Finally, the warp, or rather the jump, finally began.

A scene he saw in an old anime came to mind.

The crew members entered warp navigation with a determination to do their best. The young Seina was fascinated by the sight of them continuing to operate the ship while enduring the shocks and pressure that came at them. In this case, he couldn’t operate it himself, but he could experience the warp, or rather the jump, as a real thing. It would be a luxury to ask for more.

He firmly planted his feet, leaned his body into the seat, and closed his eyes. It would be a disaster if he bit his tongue. He would have to clench his teeth. He went to the bathroom a while ago, so he’d be fine. He opened one more button on his shirt, just in case.

All that remained was to trust Onnainin, the crew, and this spacecraft.

Only by trusting in your comrades could you be a true man of space.

He could hear the crew counting.

“3, 2, 1, jump!”

Seina put his whole body into it, feeling both fear and anticipation at the first shock.

—Soon there was a tremendous impact.

—An impact.

—An impact…

– – ……

(Huh? Not yet?)

He tried opening his eyes slightly.

Did it take a surprisingly long time after the signal to start was given, like an energy generator that needed to be charged, or the circuitry needed to be somehow connected to the zone somehow…?

"…Jump completed. We have entered hyperspace navigation."

"What!?"

Seina's eyes widened, and he couldn't help but gasp in surprise.

The thought crossed his mind that it must be a lie.

Seina has not been subjected to any impact or pressure of any kind. There was no stretching of the body, no vibration, no pressure, not even a ringing in the ears.

"Um, what about the jump…?"

"First stage completed. We are currently in hyperspace."

"Hyperspace?"

Speaking of which, there was a misty green light streaming by outside his window.

"When did that happen?"

He was a little shocked at how quickly it happened.

So this is what warp was like in reality. Was the danger, the pain of piloting the ship, everything just a dream?

"Beautiful, right? It's a luminous phenomenon caused by friction when traveling in hyperspace."

"Disappointing…" Seina stared blankly into the air.

(Well, it's true… if you think about it, risking your life every time you warp is hardly practical.)

Moreover, his knowledge came from the fictional works of Earth, where warp was not even

practical and there was practically no theory behind it.

The light outside was certainly beautiful and fantastical, but it was completely different from the dramatic and exciting thing Seina had expected.

Seina had to convince himself, with some disappointment.

“What did you expect?”

Seeing Seina’s disappointment, Onnainin softly asked.

“Ah, no, a lot of things.”

…This wasn’t a good way to brag… But…

(I came to space and experienced something resembling warp… let’s not expect more than this.)

For Seina, reality had always been cruel. The ability to give up was something he had already come to understand.

“Oh, you can just relax now.”

“Yeah. Okay.”

When Seina stood up from his chair at Onnainin’s words.

“Emergency! Shock protection!”

A yell came from one of the crew members.

Without a moment’s hesitation, a tremendous thunder-like roar and impact hit Seina and the crew.

An emergency alarm rang out inside the ship.

“Whoa!”

In an instant, a tremendous flash of plasma turned hyperspace pure white, and Seina was thrown from his seat towards the back of the bridge.

“Energy reaction detected in the same space!”

“A near miss!?”

Onnainin’s face turned pale.

“Based on the energy and mass ratio, it appears to be a large… combat ship!”

“We cannot maintain hyperspace navigation! Returning to normal space!”

Soon, the GP ship materialized in normal space, its elegant white hull covered in countless black burn marks.

“Don’t worry about it. This happens all the time……”

Mitoto gently stroked Seina’s worried head.

“Mitoto-sama! The chances of a near miss in a place like this are less than one in hundreds of billions.”

“Then you hit the jackpot.”

“…I’m not happy about hitting those odds…”

Onnainin, distracted by Mitoto’s misaligned reply, gave instructions to the crew.

“What is the status of the damage to the hull and our current location?”

“There is slight damage to the hull, but it will be repaired in a few hours!”

“Current location is… coordinates FN 78750-1290.”

“Is this a pirate-heavy area, … of all places? … It’s a blessing that the damage to the hull was minimal.”

Onnainin sat down in the captain’s chair, holding his head lightly.

“Um, pirates…?”

Seina asked. He knew what a pirate was, but had no idea that such a thing existed in space. Could it be that there was a captain with a hook for a hand and a parrot on his shoulder?

“Pirates are people who attack ships and steal their cargo. It’s no exaggeration to say that they are the GP’s greatest enemy. … I’m sorry, Seina. There was a one in a million chance that the jump coordinates would go wrong.”

“Oh, no. That’s fine…”

“It’s probably my fault,” Seina muttered, looking out the window.

It seemed that even in space, Seina’s bad luck, which drug everyone around him down, hadn’t changed. To think that it would affect a jump, and lead him to an area where pirates were common… Seina could only sigh at his own nature.

“Seina-kun, of course you’re on board, but Mitoto is on board as well. You two are important cargo, so to speak. For the sake of the GP’s reputation, I’ll deliver you safely to the Academy.”

Saying that, Onnainin smiled.

Seina tentatively returned his smile, but knowing his own misfortune, he couldn’t smile

sincerely. He would be grateful if it were only this bad.

(…It would be fine if I was the only one injured…)

On the bridge, while dealing with the aftermath, no one noticed that the panel of the spare seat where Seina had fallen when he had experienced weightlessness, was lit up red.

"Gaga… gaga… this is important cargo. For the sake of the GP's reputation, gaga… I'll gaga… gaga… deliver you gaga."

It was a rare stroke of luck that such words were heard over the communications interception system of a pirate ship sailing near coordinates FN 78750-1290.

Nothing of consequence had been intercepted and they were just about to give up and shut down the system.

"…GP's important cargo?" Marlon, an older man and captain of the pirate ship, muttered.

"The source is close. We've confirmed from the identification signal that it's a GP ship."

"Any escorts?"

"None. Looks like it's just a transport ship."

"Is it a decoy?"

"There's no that it's a decoy."

This meant that if it turned out to be a decoy, they could still get away with it.

"This is our chance," Marlon said, his eyes smiling.

Judging from the situation, it seemed that the enemy was a foolish GP transport ship that had entered an area where pirates roamed. Moreover, if all went well, it might be a disguised ship carrying important cargo.

"…It seems like it's been a while since we've had such a lucky chance… Full speed ahead, target that stupid GP ship! You guys, we'll get it no matter what!"

At the same time, the captain of another pirate ship shouted. The same communication had been intercepted there as well.

"Here we go! Capture that foolish GP ship!"

And then another ship, and another one…

"Chase them, don't let them get away!"

"I'll take your precious cargo!"

“We’ll get revenge for all of our grudges!”

Voices were heard here and there. There were roughly a dozen of them. As expected, this was an area with a lot of pirates.

Like sharks that had smelled blood, the pirates started moving toward the ship Seina was on from all directions.

Onnainin turned to Seina apologetically.

“Seina-kun, I’m sorry, but it looks like it’s going to take a little while, so please go back to your room and rest.”

“Yes, okay.”

That was it! This was his chance to contact Kiriko.

Seina ran out of the bridge like a rabbit.

As soon as he ran into the Japanese room, he picked up the phone, dialed 4989, and then Kiriko’s phone number.

“Hello, Masaki residence.”

Kai answered after one ring.

“Oh, it’s Kai?”

“Why are you surprised?”

“Well, you’ve never answered the phone on a single ring before… but that’s not important! Is Kiriko home?”

“She said she was going to your place, and then she ran out of the house in a panic.”

“To my house?”

“Yeah. She was in a big panic when I told her you were off today. She called your house and talked to your Mom about something… It was about 20 minutes ago, so she should be there by now, right?”

Slam!

Without so much as a goodbye to Kai, Seina quickly hung up the phone and entered his home phone number.

Hurry up!

Seina, who was used to missing calls all the time, was in a hurry anyway.

The phone rang once, twice, and eventually Yoshiko’s voice and an image of the store were

displayed on the screen.

The inside of the store seemed quite lively, and he remembered what Kyoko had said: “Sales are better without you here.”

“Yes, thank you very much for your patronage, Yamada Shoten.”

“Yoshiko, where’s Kiriko? “

There were many things he wanted to say, but it didn’t matter now. Anyway, it was Kiriko. Kiriko only, Kiriko only, Kiriko was number one.

“Eh, Kiriko-san? Ah, well, I think she just came and talked to mom… oh, that’s leftover, so it’s 30 yen.”

A customer holding a bar of soap that looked like a year-end gift was delighted, saying, “Oh, really?”

“Call Kiriko quickly!”

“It can’t be helped, they’re a customer.”

“Please, Yoshiko!”

“Wait a second. Yes, um… it’s 340 yen.”

Yoshiko was seen ringing up the cash register with the receiver between her shoulder and chin on the monitor.

“Hey Yoshiko, please call mom and put Kiriko on the phone…”

“Mom, big brother is calling!”

Turning around, Yoshiko called out to her mother. That wasn’t what he wanted. She’s didn’t ask her mother to put Kiriko on the phone. Seina was stuck in the midst of his little sister’s devilishness, and cried at the joy and embarrassment of the twelve-year-old’s business zeal.

His mother appeared from the back of the store and picked up the phone with a look of annoyance.

“What’s the matter, Seina? I’m busy right now.”

“I don’t need your help either. Call Kiriko.”

“Kiriko? She just left.”

“!”

Again. Again. Bad luck can be so cruel.

But at that moment, the almost-despondent Seina saw Kiriko just about to leave the

crowded store. Seina would have been able to find Kiriko in an instant, even if she had shrunk to the size of the palm of his hand.

“Hey, Kiriko’s there! Outside the store, hurry!”

“Huh? How do you know that?”

Kyoko called out to Kiriko as she headed outside the store.

“Kiriko-chaan, my idiot son wants to talk to you about something!”

But it was all in vain, as Kiriko disappeared through the entrance.

“Oh dear, it seems you’re too late.”

“Go after her and call her!”

“I’m busy. You can call Kiriko-chan’s house later.”

“No way!”

Again… he was used to it, but the most painful thing was when he missed Kiriko.

The deja vu from six months ago came back to him.

But the light shone through again.

“Auntie, is that Seina?”

Kiriko, who had disappeared out the entrance, returned.

“Oh, that’s rare.”

Finally, finally, this time.

Kiriko approached, pushing her way through the crowd of customers.

Three more steps, two more, one more, and she picked up the receiver…

“Hello, Seina-cha”

And that was it. Suddenly, the sound from the receiver and the image on the screen were cut off by static, and then the ship shook violently, and several red lines of fire appeared outside the window.

“!?”

As the emergency alarm roared through the room, Seina shouted into the receiver without knowing what was going on.

“Hello, Kiriko! Kiriko?”

“A first-level emergency has just been declared. Therefore, communication on this line has been cut off. No communication is possible until the emergency is lifted.”

The cruel voice of the announcement told Seina that the only bond he had with Kiriko had been severed.

“It’s a first-level emergency…”

Holding the receiver, he looked out the window again.

He saw several beams of light coming towards him.

“What is that?”

A moment later, boom. A jolt hit Seina.

Whoa!”

A blinding light illuminated Seina’s face as he leaned against the wall.

Beams flew against the backdrop of the dark universe, and spaceships were in danger.

“…It’s like something out of a movie…”

Seina was engrossed with watching it, forgetting that it was a light that brought death.

“What the hell is this?”

“I-I don’t know!”

“Oh, dear.”

“What happened?”

When Seina finally regained her senses after the second direct hit, he rushed to the bridge to find it a pandemonium of screams and shouts.

Even a near miss during the jump was a big deal, but the radar showed the shadows of a dozen pirate ships, all of which were attacking them. Even if they were GP, it was only natural that the crew of a transport ship, who was not fighting on the front lines, would panic in this situation.

“Aaaaah!”

It would be cruel to tell them not to lose their cool.

However, when Onnainin saw Seina’s face, his strong sense of duty somehow allowed him to regain a minimum level of composure.

“Don’t worry, Seina-kun,” he said, “This is the first time I’ve ever experienced something like this in my GP career!”

He smiled at Seina with his face twitching, but it didn’t really help his words at all.

In contrast to Onnainin, Seina’s face seemed calm.

“Seina, are you a pirate? Aren’t you afraid of them?”

Haa…… I’m used to it.”

“What?”

Ignoring Onnainin’s suspicious look, Seina scratched his head.

It wasn’t that he wasn’t scared, but he felt sorry for the panic of Onnainin and the crew who were caught up in his misfortune.

Just as he was thinking that he was causing trouble due to his bad luck, Seina noticed Mitoto watching him and Onnainin's exchange with a smile.

A smiling face. Her warm smile showed no trace of fear.

Mitoto’s smile was reassuring to Seina.

Pushed by that smile, Seina opened his mouth.

“So… what are we going to do? We’re going to get taken out if we keep going like this.”

“Eh?… Ah, I agree.”

Seina’s calm words finally brought Onnainin out of his panic.

If the captain stayed calm, the crew would naturally stay calm as well. Soon, the crew began to give accurate reports of the current situation one after another.

“The damage to the ship is insignificant at this time! There are no problems with navigation!”

“Energy remaining at 64%! Consumption is within the acceptable range!”

“Enemy ship, 7,500 meters away!”

“Only 7,500…”

Onnainin’s face turned grim. It didn’t look like he had time to think it over.

“Shall we surrender?” Mitoto asked nonchalantly.

“N-no! If the pirates find out that Mitoto-sama… a member of the Kuramitsu family is on board this ship, it will be a disaster!”

Seina learned later that the Kuramitsu family was one of the most prestigious and wealthy families in the galaxy. Naturally, the ransom would be astronomical. If the pirates found out about Mitoto, they would chase after her like crazy.

…However, it was a long time before Seina found out that this was not the case when it came to Mitoto.

“The enemy ship is now 6,800 meters away! It’s within range of a tractor net!”

“Divert all the energy from the secondary engines to the main engines.”

Mitoto, who had been acting all warm and fuzzy up until now, started to give orders.

“But that would affect the fire control system…”

“With this ship’s weapons, there’s no way we’d win a fight, right?”

“Th-that’s…” Onnainin stammered, but it seemed that Mitoto was right.

“Well, let’s run.”

“Y-yes…”

Onnainin had no choice but to comply.

Appearances were deceiving. Despite the atmosphere, Mitoto knew exactly what was going on and had a good sense of what was happening.

“Reinforce the shields on the bow in preparation for the energy nets!”

“We’ll max out the shield level!”

“Huh… To give in to warning shots from the space pirates.” Onnainin muttered, still not convinced.

“It can’t be helped. This is the situation…” Seina had intended to comfort him.

“We, the Galaxy Police, exist to break through this situation!” Onnainin said lamentably, and slumped his shoulders in disappointment.

Now that he said it, it was kinda obvious.

(It’s true, it’s not cool for the GP to run away…)

That was the boy’s honest opinion.

“But right now, we have no choice but to run away.”

Mitoto bluntly said to Onnainin about the cruel reality of the situation.

Meanwhile, on the bridge of the large pirate ship led by Marlon.

While the pirates were frantically operating the panels, Seina and the crews' communications were still being relayed to the bridge like a baseball game commentary.

"303, 448 conduction circuit interrupted. Secondary engine energy…Waaaah! Captain! The external communication circuit is ON!"

"What do you mean!?"

"Oh, so it's completely open? That's bad, did I say something strange? Hey, Mr. Pirate?"

"H-Hurry up and turn it off…"

Finally the audio cut off.

"They've finally noticed. Looks like they're dealing with some real idiots."

The operator reported to Marlon behind him in a stunned tone.

"Manpower shortages are a serious problem everywhere. …Energy net ready! Once they slow down, use the usual… However!"

"I know that. I've already reprogrammed it from a kill-all program to a capture program."

"Okay! If you hurt Mitoto-san, the others will beat you up."

"I know. Launching the energy net!"

One of the crew members pressed the red launch button.

"Energy reaction ahead!"

Several crisscrossing red streaks of light appeared in the space ahead.

It looked like a giant net.

"Energy net!"

"Quick evasion!"

Seina stared intently at the monitor showing the situation.

Floating in the center, a 3D modeled GP spacecraft dodged a web of beams - an energy net - just in time.

"The break was successful!"

“All right!”

But Onnainin’s face suddenly stiffened.

“Ahh…!?”

Surprisingly, many nets appeared around the ship, different from the ones they had dodged.

“What the!”

“Energy reaction from the enemy ship behind! Three second-level reactions! Approaching us! Prepare for impact!”

“Four, three, two, one, prepare for impact!”

Bam, bam. The ship shook violently.

“Whoa!”

Seina’s face twitched as he felt the impact almost take his seat away.

“Y-yes, hit confirmation! Three at the bottom of the ship!”

On the monitor, a missile was seen being fired into the bottom of the ship.

“What is this!?”

“Ahhh, a rat!”

Onnainin was right, as he exclaimed in disgust.

The tip of the missile had opened up and small, hemispherical robots called Rats began pouring out into the ship.

“They’ve invaded the ship! There are 6,000 of them… no, at least 10,000!”

“Traps activated!”

Hearing this, the crew became even more frantic than before as they operated their panels.

Seina watched a monitor that showed countless rats moving through the ship’s corridors. Individually, they may be adorable, but in such large numbers they were nothing short of creepy.

At that moment, countless cubic blocks began to protrude from the walls, floor, and ceiling along the invasion line. They made an operating sound similar to a cat’s meow!

“…cat and mouse…right?”

As Seina stared in amazement, one after another, the rats collided with the blocks, were absorbed into the cubes, and disappeared into the wall.

However, the rats' invasion speed was slightly faster.

"Rats have broken through Shield 5! Are they too fast? A new model?"

"Shield 2, captured all rats!"

"Shield 3, dozens have breached! Heading towards the bridge!"

"Shield 7, activate! Covering the teams that broke through Shields 3 and 5!"

"Don't worry, this one is a new model too…" With a slightly pale face, Onnainin muttered to himself.

Contrary to those words, the number of rats breaking through the shield seemed to be gradually increasing.

"Do you have version 9.42 of the prediction program?" Mitoto, who had been silent up until then, suddenly asked.

"9.42? The one from three years ago?"

"The processing is faster… so give it a try."

In response to Mitoto's words, Onnainin instructed them to switch versions.

"…! This is fast! Shield 6, all rats captured!"

"Well, it was designed to prioritize processing over prediction. Shield one, captured all rats!"

The crew members exclaimed in amazement at the speed of the processing.

As Mitoto said, it seemed to be a program that was suited to this situation.

Unlike the others who seemed to have regained some hope, Seina felt somewhat alienated.

(…I'm…useless…)

It couldn't be helped, but it was a bit frustrating.

A useless thing that only brought misfortune… This thought made Seina's face cloud over.

Unsurprisingly, there were also reports of an increased rate of rat elimination on Marlon's bridge.

"Capture rate 65…77…82! Soon to exceed 90!"

"Using an older version… we can't subdue them. Focus on the engine room."

"Roger that"

Immediately, remote instructions were given to the rats.

After receiving the order, several of the rats fused and blended into the walls of the corridor, and attempted to enter the engine room directly.

The blocks moving at high speed, captured rats one after another, but unfortunately there was a limit to the size of the blocks. They were unable to engulf all of the fused rats, and the parts that were missed caused small explosions.

This destroyed the circuits inside the wall, little by little.

“Damn! 03, 05 conduction circuits are gone!”

“Not yet eliminated!”

“Almost there! Shield 5, rebuilding complete!”

Amidst the chatter, the blocks finally succeeded in swallowing the last one.

“Rats have been eliminated! However… some of the engine’s circuits have been damaged.”

“Engine power decreasing, 120…below 100!”

It seemed like one disaster had come and gone. Seina also felt like the ship’s speed had slowed down.

In fact, the rear surveillance monitor showed the image of a large pirate ship. At this rate, it would only be a matter of minutes before they were caught up.

After checking the situation, Onnainin turned to Mitoto for confirmation.

“It’s a pretty risky gamble, but…”

“That’s the only option.”

Seina doesn’t know what was going on.

Eventually, Onnainin said with a determined look on his face, “Random jump, ready!”

Suddenly, the crew members turned around with grim looks on their faces.

“Random jump?!”

Their voices indicated that this was an extreme measure.

“With that number of pirates, we have no choice.”

The crew nodded in agreement to Mitoto’s words. It seemed that that really was the only option.

“Um… what is a random jump?”

Mitoto answered Seina's question with a smile.

"You see, to prevent the pirates from following us, we make short jumps to random coordinates over and over again. Hmm, it's kind of like skipping stones, I guess? We fly around randomly, minimizing our gravity signature while retaining the effects of entering and leaving hyperspace."

"Ah… I see."

He don't really understand the theory behind it, but he thought he somehow understood why the crew looked so anxious.

—In other words, it looked dangerous.

"Random jump program load!"

"Loading complete. Jump will begin in ten seconds!"

Despite Seina's confusion, the GP ship soon entered a random jump.

Short distance, medium distance, very short distance, short distance, medium distance.

According to a random program, the ship changed its coordinate axes one after another.

Unlike the previous jump, there was a significant impact on the bridge.

"Wa, warp……"

The hull shook and the crew struggled to control the ship.

It may have sounded disrespectful, but this was exactly what Seina had imagined and hoped for.

Eventually, the shaking and shock subsided.

"Random jump completed! Hull damage within expected margin of error."

"Did we shake them off!?"

The crew stared at the radar screen.

—Soon after, a single point of light appeared at the rear of the ship.

"!"

The number of light spots quickly increased to more than a dozen and they began flashing repeatedly.

Amazingly, the GP ship was not able to shake off a single pirate.

"Wh-why!"

Onnainin's cry expressed the feelings of the entire crew.

"Heh heh heh… nice job. Right on the mark." Pirate Marlon grinned.

In front of him, a man lovingly stroked a small device.

"I've already analyzed the GP's latest random jump program… No matter how hard they try to escape, it's easy for me."

The man was an expert in predicting jump routes - a "forecaster."

"Oh no, it looks like they're trying again"

Marlon flicked a gold coin into the hands of the tipster.

"As always…. This is for the next one."

The tipster handed Marlon a small folded up piece of paper.

"Gravitational waves detected! Ripple pattern matches, it's them again!"

After Seina and the ship completed another random jump, the pirates once again appeared around them, after having not lost a single pirate ship.

"No way… why!?"

"They must be predicting our jumps. Those guys are working together to jump in different patterns to close the holes."

"That's not possible Mitoto-sama! Even if were true, it's statistically impossible!"

"So the jump program must have been analyzed as well."

"It's the latest version that was just released a week ago!" Onnainin's voice sounded like he was about to cry.

That being said, it actually had been analyzed, so it was probably fair to say the program was no longer usable.

"In this case, the only option is to enter the coordinates manually…"

"Hmm. The numerical input for setting the trajectory of a random jump should be done by someone specially trained."

Mitoto tilted her head and said. It seemed her speech was lacking any sense of tension, no matter what the situation.

Meanwhile, an approaching pirate ship was displayed on each screen, and a loud alarm rang out across the bridge.

To put it bluntly, they were in trouble. You could even say they were in big trouble.

In this situation, Onnainin blurted out something very unexpected.

"…The only training we've received as a transport crew is to navigate the ship safely. Therefore, even if we specify the jump coordinates from now on, it's obvious that they will be read. If we fail again, we may not be able to jump at all."

"Well, I guess you could say they're better at predicting things."

"So, Mitoto-sama…"

"Yeah. Maybe we should just ask Seina."

Saying that, Mitoto and Onnainin turned to Seina.

"Seina-kun. Could you please specify the …… coordinates?"

"What, me?!"

"That's right. Since you hasn't had any training, maybe you can do it. You're the only one who can do random jumps without the GP habits we have."

"That may be true, but… I might end up flying somewhere strange…"

Before he knew it, all the crew members had turned around and were looking at him with pleading eyes.

"Seina, if things continue like this, we're finished either way. Please!"

"But……"

"Please!"

"Are you sure…?"

Although he had a bad feeling, Seina couldn't refuse and took a seat with the crew.

In front of him were panels for setting up coordinates.

"The pirate ship is getting closer! Distance 250!"

"Seina-kun, hurry up!"

"Y-Yes…"

Whatever. Seina typed in some random coordinates and pressed enter.

Soon the ship would begin the jump.

According to Onnainin's reading, this should have allowed them to escape somehow.

—Yes, if only Seina wasn't riding with them…

"……Why is …… this happening again ……"

On the bridge of the GP ship, Onnainin muttered with a stunned expression. Their faint hope that they could "escape" had been completely dashed by the worst possible situation.

In order to escape from the pirates, Seina had attempted a random jump to save the day, specifying the coordinates, three times. That third jump had just finished.

Onnainin didn't think that leaving the choice of coordinates to Seina would solve everything. Even though he didn't have any GP-like quirks, Seina was still an amateur. Even if he thought he'd entered the numbers randomly, a professional forecaster would be able to analyze them right away. But even so, it should still be effective up until the third time, and if they made three jumps, it was certain that a considerable number of pirate ships would lose sight of them.

—However.

The dots of light representing the pirate ships displayed on the radar screen spread out in a fan shape with the GP ship at the apex, multiplied in countless numbers.

Every time Seina made a jump he would find herself right in the middle of a different group of pirates, and each time he would bring them along with him.

Of course, Seina hadn't done anything intentionally; he simply entered the coordinate values as they came to mind.

And yet, oh but, but.....

It was truly a mass of bad luck and misfortune…

This was the brilliant debut of Yamada Seina, who would later become feared by the name "Lorelai."

Cha-ching!

—No, this was not the time to let it end like a comedy skit.

“The number of enemy ships is increasing!”

“There are so many of them, it’s hard to even keep track of them!”

“They’re all heading this way!”

Seina scratched his head in confusion as he listened to the crew’s tearful report.

Next to him, Mitoto was still smiling as always.

“Wow, things have gotten a lot livelier.”

“Wh, why did this happen…?”

“…I guess I’m really unlucky…”

As Seina muttered those words, Onnainin suddenly seemed to remember something and showed a pitiful, twisted expression on his face.

“Maybe when his mother said, ‘There will be less harm if you take him away while he’s asleep,’ she meant…”

“…Maybe… because this is what’s going to happen…”

Saying this, Seina bowed his head apologetically.

The bridge was dominated by a mood of “an apology won’t do anything.”

However, inside one of the pursuing pirate ships the atmosphere was even stranger.

“Tch, you’re all stalking other people’s prey…! Don’t let those guys steal our treasure!”

“Important cargo… I’ll definitely get it.” Marlon smiled. There were more rivals, other pirates, but as the first to discover it, he couldn’t give it up so easily. There was something called reputation. Especially for an older pirate like him.

But… hundreds of pirate ships chasing a single transport ship couldn’t possibly be normal. All the pirates there were trapped in a cul-de-sac of collective consciousness.

“Boss! We have an unusual visitor here.”

As his subordinate gave his report, Marlon glanced at the corner of the monitor.

In a not too distant area of space, there was a reaction from a certain huge pirate ship.

The ship bore the Shank coat of arms.

—This was the ship of a man named Radi Shank.

Radi's ships were equipped with special engines and were highly adept at sneak attacks from subspace, but in this rare instance they had been exposed in normal space.

"Hmph, it seems even cowards have desires…"

Marlon's mockery was the general pirate opinion of Radi.

The reason why Radi's ship appeared in normal space was due to a near miss with a GP ship.

Radi's ship in subspace had been interfered with by the GP ship that was performing a random jump set up by Seina, and was unable to completely correct for the distortion and was thrown back into normal space.

He too was caught up in Seina's misfortune.

"Hmm. It's been a while since I last tried normal sailing, and now I'm hearing all this fuss. Perfect timing." Radi sat arrogantly in the captain's chair.

However, he was the one who had been the most shaken up when he was dragged out into normal space. He had only just regained his composure after seeing the large number of pirates around him.

"Big names like me are the first targets for GP and Jurai," was his excuse for sneaking around, but as Marlon said, it was just cowardice.

"So what are the others after? A transport brigade?"

"That doesn't seem to be the case, papa. From what I've heard from other ships, it's a single GP ship."

Al, Radi's eldest son, looked back from the Deputy's seat. There was a phrase, "Jinroku, the Prime Minister," and he was the kind of man who deserved to be designated an endangered species.

"A GP ship? A single GP ship with this many pirates chasing it… I don't know what it's carrying, but it sounds interesting. Kekekeke."

Radi's cunning smile was strangely reptilian.

With so many pirates around, his ship would not be the only one in danger. Besides, if he ran away now, who knew what the other pirates would whisper about him? He was a timid man, but his pride was higher than most and would not allow him to escape to subspace in this situation.

"If we can get that transport before the others…"

If that happened, those stupid pirates who had been unfairly gossiping about him would probably shut up.

Radi thought and cheerfully gave instructions to his subordinates.

“Prepare for short jump! After the jump, accelerate to maximum speed! We will definitely make that ship ours!”

Meanwhile, inside the GP ship Seina was aboard, the commotion was even more intense.

They were so stunned by what had happened that they hadn’t noticed it right away, but the three random jumps had pushed the engine to its limits.

At this point, regardless of whether it was possible or not, there was no option but to escape by cruising normally.

Seina timidly raised his hand and asked Onnainin. “This is a police ship, right? Does it have any weapons? Like, something that can blow up colonies with a single shot…”

“Don’t be ridiculous, Seina! This is just a transport ship!”

In addition to the threatening attacks, energy nets deployed from several pirate ships were swarming and ominously approaching from the rear of the ship.

It was only a matter of time. Those unpleasant words crossed Seina’s mind.

“High gravity waves detected! Something is jumping in!”

“What do you mean?!” Onnainin cried out with a look of complete distress on his face.

Now, let’s go back in time a little bit.

Kamiki Seto Jurai, a member of the Jurai Nation’s royal family, said to be the strongest in the galaxy, led a combined fleet selected from each of her thirteen Sentinel fleets, the Seventh Sentinel Fleet, which was by far the most powerful of them all, and set out to defeat pirates.

Naturally, Seto’s ship, the Mikagami, had caught the chase between one GP ship and over 400 pirates. There was no way that such a flashy stunt could go unnoticed.

“What is this…?”

Hirata Kanemitsu, the fleet’s Commander-in-Chief, couldn’t help but mutter, “I’m the Sword of Seto,” and even for him, a veteran warrior who had been through many battles, this sight was nothing short of bizarre.

“This GP… is it a decoy ship?”

Masaki Minaho, who served as Seto's deputy in the intelligence department and was known as "Seto's Shield" alongside Kanemitsu, also seemed unable to hide her surprise.

"…If that's the case, they're talented enough that we'd like to scout you."

Seto, who was usually very calm, was shocked, or rather, even smiled and muttered. Just as Seto had said, this situation was the best possible "decoy."

It was no easy task to crack down on pirates who operated freely across the vast reaches of the galaxy.

The only options available to them were to identify members through years of espionage, to directly guard the materials they were after, or to use intelligence to carry out undercover operations.

However, all of these operations required a great deal of effort and financial resources, which was just how difficult it was to detect and arrest pirates.

In fact, on this day Seto was finalizing the piracy crackdown project she had been working on for some time.

They continued their undercover investigation in order to capture the "Grand Guild," a sub-organization led by a high-ranking executive of a certain huge guild, and eventually succeeded in gathering all of the organization's ships in this area using false information.

However, even though they were luring the pirate ships into a not-so-wide area of space, they were not gathering in one place out of fear of an emergency. Furthermore, they would no doubt have installed double or even triple escape systems.

Even with Seto's intelligence gathering abilities, which made up 40% of the fleet she owned and were one of the best in Jurai, and which could be said to be the backbone of the great nation of Jurai, she knew it would be impossible to capture all of the targeted ships. She thought that if they could capture the first target, the ship of the executives, and another 30% or so, they would be happy.

However, the situation before her eyes - a grand parade of over 400 pirate ships - was a supernatural phenomenon that easily surpassed even Seto's strength and effort.

"The primary target ship is nowhere to be found, but all other ships that match the data list have been confirmed. They are all pursuing the lead GP ship."

Following Hakuren's announcement from the operator's seat, Karen, Suiren, Gyokuren, Seto's ladies-in-waiting, and Mikagami operators reported on the situation one by one.

"As for the remaining pirates, there are 133 ships… No, the number is still increasing."

"Based on the energy-to-mass ratio and vibration ripples, most of them are undoubtedly illegally modified ships or disguised pirate ships."

"That's a level that wouldn't be found in a normal raid."

“There seem to be a lot of independent pirates who don’t belong to any organization.”

Hakuren and the others also had wry smiles on their faces.

“I don’t know what’s going on.”

Some of the disguised ships were even disguised as Jurai Imperial Ships, which made Kanemitsu and Minaho chuckle even more.

“They say that cracking down on pirates is like trying to recover jewels scattered across a vast desert without any clues…” Seto said, unable to contain her laughter.

"The jewels are neatly collected and displayed right in front of us."

“How about it? All of those whole thing right now…” Minaho moved her face closer to Seto.

“I don’t want to get that GP ship involved.”

Just as Seto was about to say that, Suiren shouted.

“Gravity waves detected! Large ship jumping in!”

“Identify!”

“This is… the primary target ship!”

Yes, it was the ship of Radi Shank, the leader of the Grand Guild, who had just returned to normal space after a short jump.

By the way, he was not popular at all.

“A large ship is jumping behind us!”

When Onnainin realized the true identity of that “something,” he saw space distorted in a strange way. It was evidence that a massive ship was about to jump in at close range.

At the same time, an indescribable vibration hit the GP ship. It was completely different from any vibrations they had experienced up until then; it was an extremely vicious vibration that made them instinctively feel danger. In other words, it was a desperate situation, seriously crazy.

“Evade! Evade!”

“Where should I run to?”

“Avoid it at all costs!”

As Onnainin’s screams echoed, Seina’s eyes widened as he saw the shape of a large pirate ship.

Shank's coat of arms and the Grand Guild's flag.

Its sinister appearance was on a completely different scale from any pirate ship he had seen up until then.

Seina was stunned by the majesty and could not take his eyes off it.

Has his misfortune finally reached its limit…?

Using its shields to deflect the trapping nets fired by the other ships, Radi Shank's ship forced its way between the transport and the pirates.

"Tch! Cowards are so annoying!" Marlon slammed the arm of his chair in frustration.

"I don't care, just shoot him!" Marlon wasn't the only one to think so.

"Ahahahaha!"

Seto rarely smiled while on the move. But when she saw what the pirates were doing, she definitely laughed out loud… laughed her head off.

And Seto wasn't the only one laughing: Kanemitsu, Minaho, the ladies-in-waiting, everyone in the Jurai fleet was laughing too.

"You're hated, Radi Shank."

Yes, what Seto and her comrades saw was Radi's ship being engulfed in flames, under concentrated attack not only from his fellow pirates, but also from ships belonging to his subordinate Grand Guild.

"Prepare for all-ship annihilation battle!" After a burst of laughter, Seto stood up.

"Seto-sama!"

For a moment, Minaho wasn't sure what Seto meant.

"I don't want to get the GP ships involved…" Seto said.

But the next moment, she saw Radi's ship explode and break into pieces, and understood what Seto was thinking. The distance between the GP ship and the pirate fleet was temporarily opened by the explosion of Radi's ship, which had intervened between the GP ship and the pirate fleet.

"Don't let a single ship escape!"

"Got it!"

“Hahaha! Serves you right! You’re trying to get your hands on my prey.”

At that moment, Marlon was high…or rather, the entire crew of the pirate ship was feeling that way.

They were hit by a blinding light, a distortion of space caused by an immense mass, and an impact.

A shrill emergency alarm rang out on the bridge.

“What is this? Could it be the shockwave from the explosion of Radi’s ship?”

“No! It’s much bigger than that… a high gravity wave energy reaction!”

Without a moment’s hesitation, instruments all over the place overloaded and exploded.

“Tch, turn down the sensor sensitivity!”

This treatment just barely managed to stop the explosion and plasma leak.

However, most of the sensors and instruments were rendered unusable.

No way……?”

A possibility that he didn’t want to believe occurred to Marlon. At the same time, his gave his orders.

“Emergency jump! Get out of this area as a top priority!”

“Boss! Based on the energy and mass ratio, it’s an Imperial Ship!”

“I know that! Jump quickly, hurry up!”

“No, it’s no good! The high gravity waves are making the ship unmaneuverable!”

“Damn, we didn’t make it in time!”

Marlon’s ship was not the only one affected. The tremendous distortion and noise in space rendered all ships in the area unable to act for several seconds.

It was a tremendous amount of pressure.

The sweat-drenched crew members turned to Marlon.

“Boss, what on earth is this!?”

Marlon sat down dejectedly in the captain’s chair.

“There aren’t many people in the whole wide universe who can do something like this…”

With years of experience as a pirate, he understood very well what this situation meant.

And if he couldn't steer the ship… "That" was going to happen.

Soon, mixed with the static, that word - an old general navigation code - was broadcast to all pirate ships.

"Boss, there's a high-power code this time!"

There was no need to wait for the tearful operator to report.

The code was ZZZ.

It was a code that Marlon and the other veteran pirates never wanted to hear again.

"Immediately shut down all power reactors! Shut down all energy transmission lines! Do not attempt any attacks or evasive or retreat actions!"

"Then life support will stop!" The young operator looked back at Marlon.

"Stop it! If you don't want to die, give the order to all crew members to put on their S-suits! And give the order to the other ships with Koudo Da Ruma! Hurry!"

"R-right!"

The operator quickly carried out the order, noticing the captain's tense expression.

"What?! Koudo Da Ruma has issued an order to stop all ships in the vicinity! What is going on here…?"

Marlon answered the question with a look of enlightenment on his face.

"ZZZ is a declaration of annihilation from Mikagami… Jurai's Genocide Dance of The Demon Princess."

—Genocide Dance.

Pirates…well, even for ordinary ships, they were nothing but a source of fear.

Mikagami, who issued the annihilation declaration signal ZZZ, would not stop attacking until it had sunk its target. Even if there were hostages or unrelated ships sailing nearby.

There was only one way to escape: immediate and unconditional surrender. Shut down all power reactors and energy transmission lines. No attacks or evasive or retreat actions would be allowed.

Considering the situation of the pirate ships crowded together in a small space like this and the destructive power of the Imperial Ship, escape was impossible. Marlon and the relatively older captains and crew of the other ships were well aware of this, so they shut down their ships before that happened, and showed their intention to surrender.

Thanks to these efforts, only a dozen or so pirate ships were sunk, and although many pirates were captured, they literally escaped with their lives.

“Oh, you’re all so well behaved. I like it when you’re a little naughty.”

Kanemitsu muttered softly as Seto smiled.

“Who would risk their life to be liked by Seto?”

That’s right.

“What about the GP ship?”

“They’re safe.”

Seto smiled again after hearing Minaho’s reply.

More than 400 pirate ships, both related and unrelated, were rounded up in one fell swoop. The pirates sank the Grand Guild flagship, which was the target, so there was no need to bother. The entire crew, including Radi Shank, who escaped, were also arrested. It was no wonder that Seto was in a good mood.

“…But Seto-sama, there was one ship with pirates who escaped just before we jumped.”

Operator Hakuren turned around.

“Oh really? Can you identify it?”

“It was Ryoko Balta’s ship.”

“Hmm, that idol pirate girl… Hehe, it seems she’s more than just an idol.”

Seto laughed gleefully and then looked out the window at the badly battered GP ship drifting by.

Whatever the reason, this simple transport ship attracted so many pirates.

“Now then. I need to hear a bit from them…”

Chapter Three: The Demon Princess

“Oh, it’s Mikagami-chan.” On the GP ship, Mitoto was waving happily at Mikagami on the screen.

“Mikagami…?”

Seina also stared intently at the ship. It was the first time he had seen a Jurai Imperial Ship.

The exterior of the vessel was, by all appearances, wooden. It was slender and graceful, with no room for any internal structure other than an oval capsule-like section on the front of the ship, which looked like a combination of planks.

That sparsely constructed ship, resembling a wooden interlocking structure, destroyed the pirates gathered there in an instant.

“The pirate ship seems much stronger though.”

It was no wonder Seina thought so.

“Mikagami… could that be … the Demon Princess of Jurai?” Hearing Mitoto’s words, Onnainin looked aghast.

And it wasn’t just Onnainin.

“Hey, it’s the Demon Princess!”

“The Demon Princess, you mean that Demon Princess?”

“Who else could it be?!”

In no time at all, a wave of panic spread to the operators on the bridge.

Surprisingly, the tension brought the same atmosphere to the bridge as when they were chased by many pirates earlier.

Suddenly, Seina was nervous again. Had bad luck swept in again?

“……The Demon Princess…?” Fearfully, he called out to Onnainin.

“Ah, no…!” In response to Seina’s question, Onnainin instinctively lowered his voice. “Please don’t ever tell anyone I said that. Please!”

“Is she a scary person…?” Naturally, Seina’s voice also became quieter.

“She is said to be the secret authority of Jurai, a major nation with the strongest military power in the galaxy.”

“Haa……”

Was she some kind of mafia boss? A scene from a movie he had seen before of a scary-looking man with a cigar in his mouth… or was it a woman in this case?

“Oh, don’t talk like that. She’s a fun person.”

“You can say that because you are Mitoto-sama.”

“Oh really?”

“That’s right!”

Mitoto’s words, spoken without any tension, didn’t come across as particularly scary, but Onnainin’s attitude gave off an extremely frightening impression.

“Which one is real? That Jurai Demon Princess…”

When Seina tried to ask a nearby operator for a third party’s opinion, Onnainin quickly scolded him.

“Seina! Her name is Kamiki Seto Jurai. You mustn’t call her The Demon Princess in front of her!”

“Huh.”

“That’s right. Let’s go and say hello.” Mitoto said as she took Seina’s hand.

“What?! You don’t have to go into the tiger’s cave…” Onnainin looked like he was about to burst into tears.

How many times had Seina seen that face today?

“But you will be asked to report on this situation.”

“Ah…”

Onnainin was shocked to discover a truth he had unconsciously tried to forget, and his body froze in shock. Then the cruel reality hit him hard in the form of a message from Mikagami.

Meanwhile, far away in space, a pirate ship was sailing in secret.

This was the ship of the pirate Ryoko Balta, who also appeared in the conversation in Mikagami.

“Apparently all of the ships have been captured.”

“Yes……”

Ryoko sat in the captain’s seat with her wavy black hair fluttering elegantly as she listened to her first officer’s report.

The strange scene from earlier flashed through her mind.

—An extremely strange atmosphere enveloped the bridge.

Her subordinates all let out strange noises, fascinated by the GP ship on the screen in front of them. Everyone was filled with intense excitement, like a hound chasing a rabbit.

However, unlike newly-minted recruits or combat personnel preparing to enter the ship, it was impossible for a group of veterans, let alone bridge personnel who controlled the chain of command, to get into such a state. It would be extremely dangerous for the ship if they were to get into such a state, and they had undergone rigorous training to prevent it from happening.

“Hehehe… I’m not going to give my prey to just anyone.”

Even Captain Ryoko, who should have been the calmest of them all, was caught up in the whirlwind of excitement.

“If we had continued like that… we would have surely become victims of The Demon Princess’ Genocide Dance, just like the other pirates…”

Ryoko couldn’t help but shudder at this fact.

However, with just one word she spoke, she quickly regained her senses.

— Hehehe… I won’t give my prey to just anyone! Even if there are hundreds of them…

Her deepest reason did not miss the “discomfort” of those words.

“…Hundreds of ships!?”

A situation that shouldn’t exist actually existed, and they found themselves in the middle of it.

Ryoko’s trained reason was in direct opposition to the abnormal excitement that was dominating her, and she made an emergency jump reflexively.

Now, Ryoko was able to watch from the safety of space as Mikagami and the Seventh Sentinel Fleet captured the pirates.

“…That was really close. It seems we were the only ones who survived…”

Her beautiful profile was slightly pale.

“Captain, I’m sorry…”

The adjutant, who usually didn’t show much emotion, hung his head in apology. He was a large, calm and collected man who was greatly trusted by Ryoko and the other crew members.

“It’s not just the XO’s fault, it’s ours too!”

“I know. But I wish we could have saved even just one ship…”

“It’s impossible in that state. No matter how many times we tried to send out signals to retreat after we’d regained our senses, everyone just kept chasing the GP ship like they were possessed by something.”

“Including us not too long ago.”

“Could this be a new type of decoy ship…?”

“If that’s the case, it’s not normal.”

The pirate shivered slightly, perhaps remembering the sensation he had just experienced. Although his language was rough, he was one of the calmer bridge personnel. It was safe to say that he had never before reached a mental state similar to that of a group of lemmings attempting to commit mass suicide.

“A new weapon for Jurai and the Academy?”

“I can’t say for sure yet.”

Ryoko displayed the image of the GP ship on the monitor in front of her.

“…I think we need to look into it more closely.”

As Ryoko muttered this, she saw a small dot of light approaching the GP ship.

At the GP ship’s rear container dock, Onnainin, Mitoto, and for some reason, Seina were standing there waiting to greet the shuttle boat from that point of light - Mikagami.

Onnainin seemed uneasy and looked around, unable to focus. “Ohhhhhh, I hope they’re not offended by this disgusting place……”

Indeed, the berth was somewhat dingy.

The entire crew, with the exception of Mitoto, quickly cleaned up the ship, but they were limited by both time and ability. After cleaning the bridge and the corridor, in that order, time ran out, and as a result, they did not get to the landing bay.

Besides, this ship was just a transport ship and was not designed to welcome the VIPs of such a great country. It had almost no facilities. Onnainin’s worries were natural.

“Normally, given the rank difference, it would be customary for us to go to their ship.”

“Really?”

Seina asked as Onnainin muttered that he can’t relax unless he’s talking about something.

“The heads of state of Galactic Federation member states can exercise fleet command-level authority in emergency situations, both within their own space and outside of it. In other words, Seto-sama is now my superior. Wouldn’t it be strange for that superior to come all the way here?”

“I’m sure she was being considerate.”

“She doesn’t need to be so considerate…”

Onnainin’s body was trembling with fear, tension and fatigue.

(But what kind of person is she? The Demon of Jurai … no, Kamiki Seto Jurai.) Seina thought. The person who had appeared in Mikagami’s previous communication was a man who

introduced himself as the commander of the Seventh Sentinel Fleet. He had an intimidating presence that would make him a demon, but he was obviously no princess.

Also, Onnainin didn't seem that nervous.

"Captain, the Mikagami boat will be arriving shortly."

Onnainin looked up in surprise at the voice over the intercom system that was monitoring the outside of the ship. A look of the highest level of tension ran across his face.

"It's okay, it's okay…"

From the look on his face, he was not okay. He looked like a prisoner about to be executed.

Vowoooon.

A low, heavy metallic sound was faintly heard.

"!"

Onnainin Jumped at the sound.

"Berthing complete. Requesting permission to come aboard?"

"Wa-wait a minute!"

Saying this, Onnainin took out some kind of medicine from his pocket and drank it down in one gulp. It was probably a tranquilizer.

"They are permitted to board. Please let them through…"

"Roger that."

Ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump.

Seina could hear Onnainin's heartbeat in his ears as well.

Ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump.

As if in sync, Seina's heartbeat also began to speed up.

The hatch in front of him silently opened, as if in slow motion… although of course it only seemed that way because of his nervousness.

"This looks similar to something… Oh, that's right, maybe it's one of those flashbacks you see before you die…"

That was an inauspicious analogy.

As if he didn't hear Seina's mumblings, or had no time to interject, Onnainin's eyes were opening wide in sync with the hatch opening, and he looked as if his eyes were about to pop

out.

Ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump.

Ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump.

Ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump.

Ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump.

The tension was over 120% and it was on the verge of spiraling out of control.

“Ha-chu!” Suddenly, behind them, Mitoto sneezed.

““Gaaaahhhh!””

Onnainin and Seina leapt to the door in comical overacting. Apparently, when people were really surprised, they tended to act like cartoon characters.

“Ah, ah, ah, ah……”

Onnainin was in a serious crying fit, pointing at Mitoto and trying to say something. Perhaps he wanted to say, “Please, Mitoto-sama, give me a break,” or “Please, please, please,” but his paralyzed mouth couldn’t speak.

Either way, Seina relaxed instantly and was relieved that it was just a sneeze.

“…… Um, hello?”

At that moment, they heard a woman’s voice calling out from behind them.

“!”

Yes, for a moment they had completely forgotten, but they were in the middle of welcoming Seto.

What a surprise!

And at such an extremely serious moment!

Onnainin’s flushed face suddenly turned pale. It was as if you could hear the blood draining from him.

“I am so sorryyyy!”

Onnainin then got down on the ground and begged, and as if drawn in, Seina followed suit.

A cool, gentle voice came from above his head.

"Please raise your heads. I can't talk to you if you don't lift your heads."

Was this the voice of The Demon Princess? The moment he thought that, Mitoto said happily.

“Ah, it’s Minaho-chan.”

“Oh Mitoto-sama! Again?”

“Hahahaha. That’s right.”

Some kind of exchange continued above Seina and Onnainin’s heads.

In the warm and relaxed atmosphere, Onnainin and Seina quietly raised their heads. On the other side of the hatch at the docking port, a woman was standing with two guards.

(Is this the Demon Princess, or rather Seto-sama…?)

The woman spoke to Seina, who looked puzzled.

“Nice to meet you. I’m Masaki Minaho, adjutant of the Kamiki family intelligence department.”

It was not Seto who showed up for questioning.

“Haaaaah, thank goodness…”

Onnainin, who had expected Seto to come, breathed a deep sigh of relief.

“Heh, heh.”

Minaho chuckled softly, for that reaction was something she was used to seeing.

Seto was well aware of the rumors about her. So she took advantage of the situation, scaring the other party by saying “I’m coming” and then sending Minaho. The other party would feel relieved and secure that they were in their own ship, so they would tell her things that they didn’t need to tell her. And surprisingly, there was often important meaning or information hidden in those words.

Seto’s disregard for convention was just part of the plan.

“So… was it Mitoto-sama who gathered the pirates?”

As the mother of the accidental genius, Mihoshi Kuramitsu, Mitoto was also an accidental genius, so to some extent it was possible for an abnormal situation like this to be explained - or so Minaho thought.

“No, not at all. Seina-chan collected them.” With that said, Mitoto happily hugged Seina and stroked his head.

“Seina…san? Is he a pirate?”

“Nice to meet you. I’m Yamada Seina.”

“Yamada, Seina…?”

There was a hint of confusion on Minaho’s face that no one noticed.

“Masaki-sama. I’ll give you the details.”

If he left it to Mitoto, things wouldn’t move forward. Having decided so, Onnainin began to report to Minaho what had happened so far.

First, he gave his identification number and position in the GP.

The background to this mission order.

That Mitoto was on board.

Arrival on Earth and meeting Seina’s family.

This happened after he got Seina on board.

And then a series of events began that attracted the pirates…

Remembering each question, Onnainin answered as carefully as possible.

Released from what could be described as ultimate tension, Onnainin’s tongue and mouth were as smooth as water.

“I see, well…”

On the bridge of the Mikagami, Seto looked very interested as she heard the remote report from Minaho on the GP ship.

“So……”

Ugh! (By Kanemitsu & Minaho)

Kanemitsu, who was listening to the report next to Minaho and Seto, felt a chill and had a bad feeling when he saw Seto’s expression.

—Not again?

Those eyes were something he had seen countless times before… It meant that a new sacrifice had appeared before Seto and that he and Minaho would have more work to do.

“But I never thought that Seina would be

in space…” Minaho muttered.

“Oh, do you know him?”

“No, of course I’ve never met him personally, but I’ve heard a lot about him from my father. He’s a friend of Tenchi-kun’s… I remember him being a kid who had a lot of bad luck over a lot of little things…”

Minaho added some details from her memory.

“Little things, you know…?”

As soon as she said that, Seto looked at her for a moment with a curious expression on her face…

“From Yosho…?”

It was as if Seto sensed something strange or uneasy…an expression that wasn’t usually seen on her face.

“What’s wrong?” Kanemitsu asked, sensing something slightly off.

“…No, it’s nothing. I know it’s small stuff, but it must have been quite an accomplishment to attract that many pirate ships. I think he was lucky. The chances of a pure Earthling going into space are virtually zero. Don’t you think?” Seto smiled and looked at Kanemitsu and Minaho on the screen.

Instead of replying, the two of them thought exactly the same thing in their hearts.

In other words, “If I hadn’t met Seto-sama, maybe that would have been the case…”

“What is it? It looks like you want to say something♡” Sensing this, Seto smiled even more.

“Ah… But today has been full of surprises. I never would have imagined that even Mitoto-sama was on board that ship.” Kanemitsu quickly changed the subject and tried to cover it up.

“Y-yes. I thought she was working as a cleaner at GP HQ.”

“Well, it’s Mitoto after all.”

Seto said with a wry smile. However, she wasn’t laughing about Mitoto. It was cute seeing her two subordinates desperately trying to change the subject.

Seto thought as she watched the two of them. (Then, next comes Minaho, who will report, “Seto-sama. The captain of the GP transport ship has requested departure…”)

“Seto-sama. The captain of the GP transport has requested departure.”

—As expected.

Seto even predicted the exact words.

“Request for launch?… I see. Well then…”

Minaho looked slightly relieved at Seto’s words. If she could send them to the GP Academy without being played with by Seto, she would be extremely lucky.

However, Seto’s next words disappointed Minaho.

“…Minaho. You will be in charge of repairing the GP ship.”

“Huh? Ah, but…”

“It would be a disgrace for Jurai to send the ship that contributed the most to the anti-piracy operation into space in such a dilapidated state… right?”

With that being said, she couldn’t argue any further.

“Well, that’s true…”

“In the meantime, the guest who is being delivered on that transport ship and Mitoto-sama will be looked after responsibly by Kamiki Seto Jurai. Please convey that to them.”

“Understood.”

As she bowed her head, Minaho clasped her hands together in her heart.

(I’m sorry, I’m so sorry, Seina)

“Well, the guests will be entertained by… well, that’s right. Hakuren, Gyokuren, Suiren, and Karen. Let’s have these four.”

Minaho and Kanemitsu looked suspicious at Seto’s words, which seemed to suggest there was something hidden behind them, and they glanced at each other through the screen.

Ten minutes later.

After giving instructions to her subordinates to repair the GP ship, Minaho waited with Mitoto, Seina, and Onnainin for the arrival of the four ladies in charge of entertaining.

“Minaho, what do you think?”

Kanemitsu spoke directly to Minaho through a direct line, a special one that even Seto didn’t know about.

“Perfect, I guess?”

“…You’re starting to act like my wife.”

Kanemitsu's wife was the former commander of the 7th Sentinel Fleet (currently on maternity leave).

"Heh. And the final evolved form is Seto-sama."

"That's a bit of a stretch for her, don't you think?"

Ignoring Minaho's joke, Kanemitsu continued.

"This is Seto's homework, too."

Even Minaho, who was closest to Seto, did not know everything about her. Furthermore, Seto often had many nuances and meanings in her instructions.

"It's definitely going to be the same this time."

'She's a nasty old hag, isn't she?

"Haha, that's true. But Seto-sama never does anything for nothing… so there must be a reason why she had Hakuren and her team entertain Seina."

"Hmph. I'm sure that goes for both them and the boy."

"That's probably a good thing."

"As I recall, those four are the girls that Seto-sama found somewhere."

"They're arriving. See you later, Uncle Kanemitsu."

Minaho cut off communication there and took the four women who had arrived from Mikagami to the reception room where Seina was waiting.

"Are these the entertainers…?"

"Yes. These four will be taking care of you two."

Seina looked at the four people standing behind Minaho.

It was unclear why, but all were wearing hoods that completely cover their heads, leaving only the lower half of their faces, around their mouths, visible.

"No, but… you don't need to be so considerate. I'll just wait here until the repairs are finished. Ah ha ha…"

Seina thought he'd managed to brush it off as well as he could, but it was completely ineffective as a reason to refuse.

(Seina… I know you don't want to meet Seto, but I can't just say, "Okay." I'm sorry… But I think it's kind of cute.)

Perhaps influenced by Seto's bad habits, Minaho somehow felt a sense of pleasure in

bullying Seina. It seemed that she may indeed be heading straight for the “final evolution”.

“Uh, Seina. It will take some time to repair it, and it’s dangerous.”

Perhaps out of consideration for Minaho, who was silently watching Seina, Onnainin, now freed from Seto’s pressure, made a happily irresponsible remark.

“Besides, it’s a wonderful invitation. They’ve even come to greet us.”

“Is Onnainin going too?”

“Oh, no, I’m busy directing repairs and all that!”

Seina’s reaction was as expected.

(This guy doesn’t seem like he’s going to help me. Well, it’s not like there are that many people who can help me… Ah!)

In that moment, Seina remembered someone who could help him - Kiriko.

There was no way he’d forgotten about her, but in all the chaos he’d been through, he’d completely forgotten that he’d been in the middle of contacting her. Besides, he might be able to use that contact as an excuse to avoid having to go to Mikagami. It really was a two-birds-with-one-stone idea.

Would Kiriko’s presence help in areas like this as well? Seina spoke with joy, thanking Kiriko from far away Earth.

“Umm, I have an important message to send to Earth. So, I must decline your invitation…”

“Oh, Seina, that won’t work. Right now, this area is under a communications blockade due to the pirates, so long-distance communication is not possible.”

“Wha!?”

Thanks to Onnainin’s conspiracy…or rather explanation, the biggest concern was quickly rendered unusable.

“Well, that’s unfortunate. In that case, we have a special line on our ship. We can communicate to Earth or anywhere else.”

Minaho took advantage of the situation and piled on the pressure.

“Huh?”

Seina’s heart was shaken.

It had been quite some time since he last contacted Earth, and nearly twelve hours since he woke up here.

(I have to hurry, Kiriko will be worried… and besides)

He glanced over at Mitoto, her smile once again reassuring Seina.

(Will it be okay if I'm with Mitoto?)

"Then let's go, Seina-chan."

Mitoto's words were the final blow.

"A-alright…"

Although he ultimately reached the "true ending," Seina was unaware at the time that he had chosen the worst possible option in the process.

"Thank goodness. Oh, that's right. It's a bit late, but I'll introduce Seina-sama's hostesses."

"Allow me to introduce Seina-sama's entertainers for the day."
When Minaho spoke, the four women, who had been waiting in the back,
suddenly moved forward and removed their hoods at the same time.

As Minaho spoke, the four women who had been standing behind her stepped forward in front of her and simultaneously removed their hoods.

"Wow!" He couldn't help but exclaim.

All four of them were beautiful women. Seina's attention was immediately riveted on those women, none of whom could be faulted for any of their beauty.

Well, it was true that they were asked to be entertainers, so they were expected to look good, but he was just an Earthling, and had caused this whole mess. He wasn't worthy of that kind of entertainment or anything.

(Ah… but Seto-sama is apparently the most powerful woman in the country… so maybe this is normal?)

That's right - the girls who were to entertain him were probably average. It was much more natural to think this way than to find excessive value in himself.

Seina's misfortune since childhood had made him so thoroughly underestimate himself that he had no confidence in others.

('m just an unlucky guy.)

"Well then…"

Once Seina had calmed down, Minaho began introducing the four of them.

"This is Hakuren."

"Nice to meet you, Seina-sama."

Hakuren, bowing respectfully, was a serious-looking woman with straight, pale blue hair, the type you'd expect to be a class representative.

"Next is Karen."

"Thank you in advance."

This woman was petite, with striking tanned skin and red hair, and looked like a tomboy. Although she was tom-boyish, she also had plenty of feminine charm.

"This is Suiren."

"My name is Suiren. I'm a humble person, but I hope you'll help me out."

"What a fool…"

It was as if she had come to greet someone at a wedding - she had green hair and was the only woman wearing glasses.

But even though she wore thin, silver-rimmed glasses that gave off an intellectual image, she didn't give off a particularly harsh impression. It could be because of her greeting, or maybe she had a somewhat absent-minded air about her, or maybe it was her scent that reminded him of Mitoto…

"And lastly… oh?"

There was no one where Minaho was pointing.

(Huh? I think there was one other person there just now?)

The moment Seina thought that.

“My name is Gyokuren.”

Suddenly, a voice came from behind his ear, and Seina felt two soft objects being pressed against his upper arms.

“Wow!”

“Oh, excuse me. I didn’t mean to startle you…”

Gyokuren smiled as she watched Seina jump back in a panic.

She was a beautiful woman with silver, silky hair that could easily be mistaken for white. Her decadent, languid eyes left a strong impression. She seemed more like a seductive beauty than a sexy one.

“…Damn, I like her.”

Meanwhile, on the bridge, the operators were glued to the surveillance monitors, spying on Seina and the others.

“Jurai’s entertainment… I bet it’s amazing.”

“Suddenly, four beautiful women like that are attached to him.”

However, not a single one said they wanted to follow him.

——You can’t catch a tiger cub unless you enter the tiger’s den. —— However, the person in the tiger’s den was Seto.

“I guess we’ll just have to give up, stupid Seina.”

“Yeah, stupid Seina.”

They directed their pent-up anger at Seina, hurling curses at him over and over again…

The shuttle that they boarded was also made of wood. Moreover, it was simply built, like a dugout canoe, making it hard to imagine it could fly in space.

“Is this really…space?”

He revisited the question that woke him up in the morning.

“I heard that you are from an early civilization planet, Seina-sama.”

Hakuren, who was standing next to Seina, spoke to him. It seemed she was the leader of the hospitality team, and so far she had been handling most of the conversation.

He later learned that the other three were keeping an eye on Mitoto.

Well, whatever.

“Early civilization?”

“Yes. I’m talking about people who have a level of civilization that can escape the gravitational field in manned ships. When interstellar travel becomes possible, that will be the second stage.”

“I see… On Earth, people have only traveled to its satellites… Wow.”

Through the shield covering the ship, a ship called Mikagami could be seen.

“Is it really made of wood?”

He leaned over the railing and stared at Mikagami.

“Yes. Jurai is a planet with gigantic trees measuring several kilometers tall, and this exterior is made from a single tree with almost no joins other than the decorative parts.”

“K-Kilometer-sized trees? Do such things exist? On Earth, even the biggest ones are only about 100 meters tall…”

“Haha, trees that big only exist on Jurai.”

“Hmm… What? Is that in the ring in the middle… water?”

The main body of Mikagami was in the shape of a double ring, with the inner ring was filled with liquid that reflected light and shimmered.

“The origin of the name Mikagami… No, it’s a decoration based on that name.”

“It’s like a big swimming pool.”

“Yes, you can swim there.”

“Wha-?”

“Sometimes, Seto and I swim there. If you don’t mind, why not come too, Seina? It’s a strange feeling.”

“Yes, it certainly looks like it would feel good…”

(Was it a spacewalk? Although that may be true, if I do something like that, some kind of bad luck will strike me again.) As he was vaguely thinking about this, Hakuren said with a grin.

“Well, we will arrive soon. We will show you to the guesthouse, so you can rest and contact Earth at that time. After that, Seto will greet you.”

“Y-yes.”

Seina's spine stiffened when he heard about Seto's greeting.

"Wh-what is this…?"

Accompanied by Hakuren and the other ladies, Seina was guided inside the Mikagami, where he was overwhelmed by the strange and imposing environment inside.

"So… so big…"

The interior of Mikagami contained a vast space that could be called a "living area" and was much larger than one would imagine from its compact exterior. Moreover, it was not a mechanical space like in the world of science fiction, but a space that blended in with nature.

(I thought for sure it would be something like a gymnasium…)

It was no wonder Seina was surprised.

"I've seen movies where the inside of a UFO is bigger than the outside, but I've never seen one this big…"

There was a river, lush greenery, and animals roaming free. The environment and size was so absurd that it was hard to believe that he was in space or on a ship.

"This is a spherical space with a diameter of about 10 kilometers that has been fixed in subspace by the power of Mikagami-sama."

Hakuren explained to Seina, whose mouth was half open.

"So, strictly speaking, it's not inside Mikagami-sama."

"Ha, ha… that's difficult."

Inside the ship, but not inside the ship. Seina couldn't keep up with the Zen-like riddle. Hakuren tried to give a more detailed explanation, but of course there was no way Seina could understand it. He had only received compulsory education at the Earth level.

(Now that I think about it, Hakuren mentioned something about a guest house earlier, but I thought she must have meant guest room…)

Seina looked out over the residential area once again. The distant mountains were hazy and the green of the trees was dazzling.

"It feels good… The air is clean. Well, the inside of the GP ship was pretty comfortable as well."

"Mikagami-sama has control over the air and temperature inside. It's the perfect environment for people."

“I see,” Seina nodded, feeling something nostalgic about the atmosphere.

Where was it?

(Oh, I see. Like the area near Tenchi-senpai’s house…)

Seina felt a sense of familiarity with this place, as it reminded him of the area around the Masaki house where he often played.

“Do you like it?”

“Yes, it’s amazing… Huh?”

When Seina looked back at Hakuren and the others behind her, he felt something was a bit off.

“What’s wrong?”

Realizing the source of the discomfort, Seina scratched his head and said, “Um, Mitoto-san…”

“Mitoto-sama?”

Upon hearing those words, everyone looked to where Mitoto was supposed to be.

“She’s not here…”

“!”

Perhaps it was some kind of illusion or miracle, but Mitoto, who was supposed to be surrounded by the three ladies-in-waiting, had suddenly vanished. No one knew when she had disappeared.

That’s ridiculous!”

“Gyokuren, please take care of Seina-sama! Karen, Suiren!”

Hakuren’s face turned pale and she took the two of them and ran off to look for Mitoto.

Gyokuren, who was left in charge, took Seina’s hand.

“Come, Seina-sama.”

Oh, um, we should look for…… too.”

“There are other ladies-in-waiting besides those three. And even if she goes missing, Mitoto-sama can’t leave Mikagami-sama’s subspace, so there is no need to worry.”

“Haa……”

(Is that really how it is? Or rather, is this an everyday occurrence for Mitoto?) Seina thought of himself as being unusual in a negative way, but he was strangely impressed that there were other unusual people out there.

“This is the guesthouse. Please make yourself at home.”

The place where Seina was taken was a large log house.

(…Maybe it’s like the Great Buddha Hall of Todaiji Temple that we went to on our school trip?)

The exterior walls were covered with ivy and moss, and there was a giant tree in the center of the house… No. Rather, it was built with the giant tree as its main pillar. The house was shaped like a dumpling with curved lines all over.

Inside was the small box-shaped screen of the familiar black telephone.

“You can contact Earth from here.”

“Excuse me.”

With that, Seina jumped at the box and started dialing a familiar number.

Geekorokoro. Geekorokoro. Geekorokoro. Geekorokoro.

Buzz, buzz, buzz.

“Is it busy…?”

Geekorokoro. Geekorokoro. Geekorokoro. Geekorokoro.

Buzz, buzz, buzz.

No matter how many times he called Kiriko’s house, it was always busy.

“That’s strange, neither Kiriko nor Kai make long phone calls…”

Just as Seina was making his phone call to Earth, Seto was smiling faintly as she gazed at the

person on the communication monitor. However, due to the highly advanced anti-eavesdropping system, the image was distorted and the only thing she could hear was the other person's voice.

"I see. …… I understand what's going on."

"So, please send him back as soon as possible…"

The person on the other end of the line sounded desperate.

"It's true that galactic law strictly prohibits contact with early human civilizations, much less taking them into space… but it's not unheard of on Earth… right?"

There was a certain excitement in Seto's words.

"But. Seto-sama!"

"See you later. Thank you for your hard work."

"Oh hey Seto-sa!"

Seto hung up the call as if ignoring what the other person was saying, and smiled with the most amused expression on her face.

"Hahahahahaha… It's rare to see her so upset."

"Good grief… I guess she'll be playing with her for a while."

Minaho, who had returned from the GP ship, sighed as she thought about the future of Seto's communication partner and looked at Kanemitsu with pleading eyes. Without being prompted, Kanemitsu spoke.

"…Seto-sama. Considering his characteristics, shouldn't we send him back to Earth?"

Of course, he know that giving advice to Seto would be useless.

"Oh, I'm not going to force him."

Seto said it so nonchalantly, to which Kanemitsu secretly cried bitterly.

(Damn, you old bitch… It would be easy for you to make him do it without any pressure. ……)

"Oh. Is there something you want to say?"

"N-no……"

Seto asked, knowing what Kanemitsu was thinking. At that moment, the operator's voice cut into the conversation, probably to the rescue of Kanemitsu, who was at a loss for an answer.

"Seto-sama, Kanemitsu-sama, excuse me. We have identified the person who recruited

Yamada Seina to join the GP on Earth. Her name is Second Class Detective Amane Kaunaq."

At the same time, Amane's face making a V sign appeared on the screen.

"I thought so. It's that girl from the Kaunaq family…" Seto nodded a couple of times as if she understood. "…As expected, that girl is the only person going to Earth who is that careless."

Kanemitsu looked a little puzzled when he heard the rank of second class detective.

"I heard that her parents were against her joining GP."

"That information is out of date. A while ago, she had a big fight with her father and left home. Well, he wanted her to get married and settle down as soon as possible."

"…Now that I think about it, Seto-sama arranged a matchmaking session for her in the past, didn't you? I haven't heard the results yet…"

In response to Minaho's question, Seto smiled broadly.

The Kaunaq family ran the long-established clothing and accessory brand "Kaunaq," whose headquarters were located within the Galaxy Academy. In the past, the company was also known as a manufacturer of the military Guardian System, also known as "GS," which was an extension of their clothing company, but the GS division was now independent and directly managed by the Academy.

But to get back to the point, Amane Kaunaq was the only daughter of the family, meaning she was an extremely wealthy young lady. Therefore, her arranged marriage partner must also be of a certain "status." That's why Amane's parents, who were also friends with Seto, asked Seto to arrange the marriage.

Recalling the matchmaking incident, Seto began to speak with deep emotion.

"…That was a really fun way to get crushed."

"Did Seto fail her matchmaking?"

""Ho ho ho, I make mistakes too."

With that, Seto showed the recording of that moment on the monitor.

"Wh-what is this guy…"

Kanemitsu and Minaho were stunned when they saw the arranged marriage partner on a large monitor.

There, the son of a major food company, who had the air of a typical "mama's boy honor student," was posing in a sly manner, looking up and gazing at Amane as if hiding in his mother's shadow.

"Wow…"

The next moment, Minaho and the others were put off by their “real” behavior, Amane in the recorded footage became enraged and grabbed him by the collar, shaking him back and forth and shouting, “Are you really a man?”, causing the matchmaking session to fall apart.

“Hahaha! So, so, the next one is a masterpiece. The second one is about the son of a certain university president at the Academy.”

Without paying any attention to Kanemitsu and the others’ reactions, Seto played the next clip.

This time, her opponent was a skinny, listless young professor who seemed to have stomach problems.

“I, I don’t really like many things… I’m quite sensitive.” As he said this, he carefully picked out the things he didn’t like from his food.

And the next moment, Amane was seen forcing the plate into his mouth, saying, “Don’t be picky!”

“The third one was the youngest son of a large company president of a battleship equipment manufacturer, and was brought up in the lap of luxury. He was a haughty young man with no manners whatsoever, who was always surrounded by alcohol and women, relying on his wealth.”

As might be expected from the events and introductions so far, this was even more dramatic.

Just six seconds into the matchmaking, the man asked, “Are you Amane? Do you want to be my woman?”, and Amane fired a straight right punch straight at the man’s face. After a split-second kill, she proceeded to beat up the man’s parents and entourage one by one, creating a scene of hellish screams and shouts.

“Gahahaha… That’s why it’s so hard to find someone who meets her standards.” She had a bright expression and was clearly not troubled.

“…It just seems like you’re harassing her…”

Minaho tugged on Kanemitsu’s sleeve, who stood there astonished, and whispered in his ear. “Uncle Kanemitsu. Seto-sama seems to be obsessed with a program called ‘Interesting Videos’ lately.”

“So you’re collecting videos of failed engagements?”

“That’s it. She’s acting all wild. I guess she likes her.”

Whether she was aware of the conversation or not, Seto continued with glee.

“So, I had no choice but to find someone from my Imperial Family who looked good. And this time, they got along great. They had a great time talking at the matchmaking meeting and had similar hobbies.”

“…So you’re planning on putting it all together.”

“But…”

““But?”” Minaho and Kanemitsu’s voices harmonized.

“This was a great friendship situation, and I received an invitation to the wedding reception to tell me that he is going to marry the female friend that Amane introduced him to.”

“… Oh dear.”

They were speechless…

“Hehe, Amane, her, and that guy… well, maybe this will get interesting…” Seto muttered, a sly look on her face.

The two could only sympathize with their fate.

“By the way, Kanemitsu-san. Getting back to the point…”

“Y-yes?”

Seto suddenly turned serious, and Kanemitsu was unable to react, letting out a muffled cry.

“Would he… would a boy miss such an opportunity? You know.” Seto looked at Kanemitsu with a meaningful look in her eyes.

“Ahhh…”

Minaho, who was able to accurately predict how Seto’s words would turn out… no, perhaps it should be called a premonition in this case, sighed and rubbed her temples.

At the same time, Kanemitsu realized that he had fallen into Seto’s trap. In this situation, there was only one answer that he could give as Hirata Kanemitsu. Nevertheless, he tried his best to resist.

“…It seems that Seto-sama would like him to do so…”

“Yeah?”

An all-seeing and gentle gaze.

“Is that really the right answer?” Seto’s eyes were saying.

When Kanemitsu was a boy, he had hopes for the future. However, there was a big wall in the way of those hopes that the boy Kanemitsu could not overcome. It was Seto who extended a helping hand to Kanemitsu, who was struggling.

(Well, in the end it was a bit like making a deal with the devil…)

Kanemitsu recalled. The path that Seto invited him to take was filled with challenges far

beyond anything he had faced before. In fact, there was an easier path, but Seto had deliberately blocked it from him. However, Kanemitsu has never regretted his decision as a boy.

(Even if it was for her sake, nothing beats my own decision…)

Ultimately, only you have the right to decide your own future.

Kanemitsu sighed deeply and reassured himself.

——This is fine.

——That's how I was, so I guess that's how he will be too.

——Well, do your best.

——I'll help you if there's anything I can do, so don't resent me.

Kanemitsu prayed and slowly began to speak.

"If it were me… I wouldn't let that slip away!"

That meant that Kanemitsu would also be playing a part in Seto's success.

"Very good." Seto nodded in satisfaction.

"Well, let's go see him."

Saying this, Seto stood up straight, then remembered something and added, "That's right, Minaho-chan. You hold her back… Thank you ♡"

"Uh… Okay, okay, I understand…"

Minaho's worries were never-ending.

"Whaaaaaaaaat?!"

Seina screamed into the phone.

Kai, on the other side of the monitor, pressed his hands over his ears.

"Kiriko went back to work?"

"Yeah, she just called me. She had some trouble at work… She just left."

"No way…"

Seina collapsed to his knees, all strength gone from his body. His expression was pitiful, as if the end of the world had come.

“Well, she’ll probably be there in about five or six hours, so I guess you can call her then. See you.”

“Hey, Kai! Kai!”

Seina yelled in vain but the call was cut off. Well, even if he talked to Kai more, Kiriko wouldn’t come back.

He gave up, thinking it couldn’t be helped and was about to hang up the receiver slowly, still feeling a bit reluctant, when…

He felt two familiar soft things touch his back.

“Who is Kiriko?”

The nasal voice, the breath on my neck. Of course, it was Gyokuren.

“Wha-aat!”

Seina reflexively jumped, but this was inside a small phone booth. No matter how far away he tried to get, the distance between Seina and Gyokuren was only a few dozen centimeters… they remained as close as lovers could wish.

“Ahhh, ahhhh, um, um.”

“What happened? You’re sweating a lot.”

As she said this, Gyokuren moved her face even closer.

“Um… don’t get too close…”

“Haha. It’s a small place, so I guess that can’t be helped.”

“Then why don’t you just go out…”

“Kiriko-sama… what is she to Seina-sama?”

“Even if you ask me that…”

That beautiful face, those eyes and voice that seemed to manipulate his mind… it was right in front of him. Normally, it would have been a situation that would have been impossible to resist. But in Seina’s case, it was barely hanging on by a thin, spider’s thread.

(This situation… reminds me of when I met Amane on Earth…)

They both shared an extraordinary beauty. But it was a stark contrast. Like yin and yang, like the moon and the sun. Amane’s sunlight-like blonde hair and healthy sex appeal. And Gyokuren’s moonlight-like silver hair and quiet sex appeal.

The intriguing contrast was the only thing that kept Seina rational.

(If I hadn't met Amane, this might have been dangerous…)

Even now, when he thought about it like that, he still felt like he was on the brink of losing his sanity.

"……"

Gyokuren, noticing Seina's slight calmness, quickly stepped back.

She asked Seina, who was breathing a sigh of relief.

"Is Kiriko-sama your lover, Seina-sama?"

"Eh! N-No, that's not it… I mean, she's like an older sister to me…"

From his attitude, it was obvious that Seina had special feelings for Kiriko. However, Gyokuren chose to ignore him.

"I see, that's good."

"Huh?… Wh, what do you mean?"

Seina noticed that there was something sinister in Gyokuren's eyes.

That was the moment.

"Seina-chan"

Before they knew it, Mitoto was standing right next to Seina and Gyokuren.

"!!!!!!"

If it had been just Seina, he would have just been shocked.

However, Gyokuren was nearby as well. Gyokuren, who always seemed calm, was also surprised by Mitoto's sudden appearance, and as a result, Seina and Gyokuren ended up hugging each other tightly.

"S-sorry!"

Realizing this, Seina reflexively moved away and, with incredibly dexterous crab-walking, escaped from the box with incredible speed and the small space in which the three of them were crammed.

Next, Gyokuren, with flushed cheeks, bowed as she stepped out of the box.

"No, I'm the one who should be sorry…"

"Hey, what were you playing?" Mitoto, unaware of the situation, asked without hesitation.

"We weren't just playing around… Mitoto-sama, what happened to the other girls?"

Gyokuren looked around, trying to hide her embarrassment.

“Everyone else? I haven’t seen them so I don’t know…”

“I, I see…”

It seemed that Mitoto hadn’t been caught in Hakuren and the other girls search net either. Well, in the end, he was relieved that she had shown up on her own…

“Oh no. I completely forgot that Seto had called for me.”

That’s what she was doing when she had gone behind Seina in the phone booth. When Mitoto appeared, Gyokuren remembered that and closed her eyes, sending a message to the other three.

“Mitoto, someone will be here shortly, so please wait here for a bit. Seina, please come with me. I will take you to Seto.”

“What?! Mitoto-san isn’t coming with us?!”

Seina’s expression froze. Even if he was going to meet Seto, he thought it would be best if Mitoto was with him.

Moreover, even if he were to meet her in person, he could not afford it after all the chaos that was going on right now.

“I want to meet Seto-sama also.”

Mitoto’s words seemed like the thread of Buddha’s spider… But…

“I understand how you feel, but your family is worried about you. I think it would be best if you contacted them first.”

“Oh no! Father will get mad at me again.”

With Gyokuren’s words, the thread seemed to snap. Mitoto quickly returned to the phone booth and began dialing.

“Ah, Mitoto-san…”

Gyokuren grabbed Seina’s hand as if asking for help.

“Well then.” Gyokuren smiled gently. “Let’s go.”

“Wha-wha-aat?”

There was no way for Seina to refuse anymore.

A few minutes later.

Seina's heart was pounding as he stood in front of the gate that would transport them to Seto.

Although they were a little timid, Onnainin and the operators had a fair amount of experience in the GP. Seto must be that scary. Mitoto didn't seem to mind, but she was definitely special. Seina was more like Onnainin.

"…Kiriko-san…"

He spoke the name of the being who protected him. If Kiriko were here, what would she say?

"Stand strong, Seina-chan."

"It's okay, Seina-chan."

"I'm with you, Seina."

"Do you have a handkerchief and tissue paper, Seina?"

The encouragement Kiriko had given him so many times since he was a child came back to his ears.

Seina, rousing himself from the urge run away muttered, "I'm not going to run away from this."

"Kiriko-san, I'll do my best…"

"Yes. Good luck."

Suddenly, Gyokuren, who was leading the way, looked around.

"Huh!?"

"At the very least, I'll take Kiriko's place."

Gyokuren stopped and turned to face Seina.

"I am not permitted to accompany you any further than this. So… please do your best."

Of course, Gyokuren was a completely different type of person than Kiriko, but there was no way he would feel bad about a woman saying this to him. And no one else had ever said that to him before.

"Oh, thank you."

Even if it was merely a formality, he was thankful for her comment. The encouraging feeling helped to relieve some of the tension that had been building up in his chest and back.

"This way."

Guided by Gyokuren, Seina stepped into the gate.

“!”

For a moment, everything around him went white.

——When he noticed it, the scenery in front of him had completely changed.

Natural light shone into the pitch black space. Even though it was unclear where the light source was, the scenery floating there made him feel as if he was outside.

It was like a theatre stage, so to speak.

This was the heart of Mikagami, with the Royal Tree in the middle.

“Where am I…?”

The woman on the throne in front of him stood up before the astonished Seina.

“Welcome to Mikagami, Yamada Seina-dono”

The beautiful woman smiled gently at Seina.

Kiriko, of course, but also Amane, Mitoto, and this woman. Of course, Hakuren and the other girls were also quite beautiful. In these two days, Seina has encountered many more beautiful women than he had ever met in his entire life.

As he was vaguely thinking about this, the woman spoke again.

“Nice to meet you. I’m Kamiki Seto Jurai.”

“What? Seto Jurai…”

He couldn’t believe it. This was the woman known as The Demon Princess?

The sight of Seto bowing with an elegant demeanor was completely different to what Seina had imagined from what he had seen and heard.

Seina could not understand why Onnainin was afraid of her: her gentle smile, her interesting, yet unintimidating voice.

(Rumors can’t be trusted…)

Well, rumors tended to be exaggerated. Seina agreed, and felt a comfortable sensation as the fear and tension he had been feeling suddenly melted away.

Kanemitsu, who was standing next to Seto, looked on with a somber look on his face.

(That’s truly the smile of the devil…)

Kanemitsu felt sympathy for Seina's naivety, who was quickly taken in by Seto's tricks and was completely dazed. And now he and the old hag were going to deceive that innocent boy. It was a depressing story for Bujin Hirata Kanemitsu.

He also fully understood that his own feelings made Seto's plan even easier to carry out, and so his face became even more tense. In other words, he was completely cornered.

In any case, Seina stared at Seto, completely unaware of Kanemitsu's thoughts.

"……?"

At that moment, Seina felt something nostalgic.

Of course, he didn't know for sure. He just had this strange feeling that it wasn't the first time he'd seen Seto.

"What's wrong?"

Seto spoke to Seina, who stared in silence.

"Oh, no, well… nice to meet you. My name is Yamada Seina."

He was so fascinated that he ended up being late in greeting her. His awkwardness and embarrassment from staring at her made Seina blush and bow his head.

"Hohoho, don't be so stiff. Oh yes, let me introduce you. This is my subordinate…"

"I am Hirata Kanemitsu, commander of the Seventh Sentinel Fleet."

Kanemitsu turned to Seina with a stiff face and bowed. Seina was instinctively overwhelmed by the glint in his eyes, which reminded him more of a warlord from the Warring States period than a soldier. He even sensed that he would immediately chop him down if he showed any disrespect.

This is exactly what Seto's plan was.

With these two contrasting characters side by side, Seina naturally became more dependent on Seto, which meant he became even less wary of her.

That was the reason why Minaho wasn't there.

"Well, what's the point of just talking? Come on over here."

Accompanied by Seto and Kanemitsu, Seina entered another gate.

"…… Wow ……"

The place he was transported to was in a different location, but it was the same huge residential area he had been in earlier.

However, the reason for the completely different impression was that the garden was quite high up, offering a panoramic view of the entire garden below. A small guesthouse was also visible.

But what surprised Seina more than anything was the giant tree that stood in the middle of it all. Its overwhelming presence made it seem as if it was holding up the heavens. The term ‘World Tree’ was fitting for it. When Hakuren and the others were guiding him earlier, he had been so close to the tree that he hadn’t noticed it.

“This is… a tree measuring kilometers? I thought it was a tower…”

“Well, come in.”

As Seina stared in shock, Seto offered him tea she made herself. Seina came to his senses, then quietly took the teacup.

“This was a total disaster.”

When Seina heard the word ‘disaster’, his face clouded over a little.

Disaster was also the nickname that his classmates gave him, other than ‘Ikkyu’. Of course, this came from the fact that the kanji for “Seina” could also be read as “Sainan.”

Seina didn’t like that word very much. Of course, he knew that Seto didn’t mean it, but it had become a conditioned reflex for him.

Whether she knew it or not, Seto carried on.

“First of all, I wanted to thank you, Seina-sama, so I called you here. Thank you so much, Seina-sama.”

“What? But I haven’t done anything to be thanked for?”

“You’ve set the jump coordinates for the GP ship, right?” Seto chuckled and stared intently at Seina.

There was something bewitching about her eyes, which left him confused.

“Well, that was just the way things turned out…. It just happened like that.”

"Have you ever been chased by pirates?"

“…Yes. I have really bad luck, and we ran into pirates everywhere we jumped, and I caused trouble for everyone…”

“Thanks to that, we were able to capture a large number of pirates scattered throughout this space.”

“Thanks to me?”

“Yes. It’s all thanks to you. This is my way of thanking you.”

It was the first time Seina had ever heard that phrase. Although he had heard “it’s all your fault” so many times that he was sick of it…

“It is difficult to apprehend pirates, and for this purpose I have deployed forty percent of my entire fleet. However, even with that many, there have been few reports of pirates being spotted, and according to my calculations, even if all went well, the number of pirates we would have apprehended was only ten percent of the number that you gathered.”

“Oh, is that so…”

It was a story that didn’t make any sense to him at all.

“However, you, Seina-dono, have accomplished more than our entire fleet with just one ship. It is a remarkable achievement… no, it could even be called a miracle.”

“No, not that kind of ……”

Seina was seized by a feeling that was both awkward and proud.

Even though it was the result of bad luck, he was being praised by someone else - someone who was celebrated as a powerful woman of a great nation and feared by everyone.

“Hey, Seina-dono. If you look at it from another perspective, your misfortune is actually a great talent. I’m sure you’ll be very welcome at the GP.”

“W-welcome…?”

Seina couldn’t believe his ears for a moment. ‘Welcome’. What a delightful word.

The Galaxy Police needed his talent for misfortune and would welcome him. Seina could picture in his mind people in GP uniforms clamoring to shake his hand.

To be needed by others――.

He felt his body heat up. It was the first compliment Seina had ever received, and it made him feel even happier. He was in heaven.

And then, at that moment.

“But… there’s a problem.”

Kanemitsu, who had been standing next to Seto until then, suddenly began speaking the truth that would cause the everything to fall apart.

“I’m sorry to have to tell you this at such a special time, but… the truth is, it is forbidden by galactic law to send a pure Earthling like Seina-dono into space.”

“What?”

As Seina exclaimed, Kanemitsu gives him a stern look and continued.

“Earth is a planet with an early civilization that has not yet developed the technology to travel between stars. Many planets have been given such rapid technology and have been destroyed… What’s more, if there is no unified nation even on the planet itself… Do you understand? That’s why it is strictly forbidden to take residents of planets at that stage into space.”

Seto slowly closed her eyes, confirming Kanemitsu’s words.

“Moreover, although your talent is certainly useful, it would also means that you will be in constant danger. For the sake of us and the GP, we cannot allow that to happen.”

Kanemitsu’s words were grave.

“No way…”

“Therefore, we will take full responsibility and safely return you to Earth. However, due to regulations, we will have to erase your memories of your time in space.”

“!”

At those words, Seina’s expression hardened.

—Erase my memories?!

After all the effort of coming to space and finally being recognized by others…

His shoulders slumped in shock.

The greater the happiness he found, the greater the disappointment. Was there nothing he could do? He finally felt like he had found his place, a place where he was needed!

“…It’s not like there’s no precedent.”

Seto, who was watching Seina, muttered something.

“Really?”

Seina looked at Seto with pleading eyes.

… How long did the silence continue? In reality it was only a few seconds, but to Seina it felt like an eternity.

Seto lowered her eyes sadly and said in a pained tone,

“I’m sorry… Seina-dono. I was so excited that I said something irresponsible…”

Those voices and words captured Seina’s heart and would not let go.

The play was reaching its climax. The actors put in more effort.

“…Just as Kanemitsu said, your talent brings with it many dangers… But once you return to

Earth, at least your life will be safe. But still!”

Seto looked at her sharply.

“…But still, you want to be in the GP?”

“!”

Those eyes were not the kind ones Seto had shown up until now. They were even more intimidating than Kanemitsu’s…there was a sternness there that would not tolerate half-heartedness. Seina gasped, realizing he had seen part of the reason why she was called Jurai’s Demon Princess.

“……”

Think. Think seriously.

Returning to Earth would certainly put his life out of danger, but he would also forget his knowledge of the mysteries of the universe, his dream of working for the Galaxy Police, and even his precious experiences of hyperspace travel and even his encounter with aliens before that.

(But, but… that’s not enough!)

—For the first time, he felt needed by someone—

For Seina, forgetting that fact was the hardest thing of all.

His feelings surpassed the intimidating presence of Seto in front of him, and even his feelings for Kiriko. No matter how much he underestimated himself and had given up on many things, there were still some things that he could not give up.

To throw that away would be tantamount to giving up on life.

“I don’t want to go home…” Seina said. He said it clearly. It was the first time he had ever been selfish.

“…In space, no one can guarantee your safety, and there are cases where they won’t even help you. If you make a decision now, there’s no going back, you know?”

“Yes.” He looked at Seto and answered again, without any hesitation. “…Please. Let me stay in space!”

Seto felt an intense pleasure in her heart as Seina looked at her with such sincerity in his eyes.

(This is what I wanted to see.)

She desperately tried to hold back the smile that was about to escape and continued acting.

“I see… I understand. No one has the right to stop a boy who has decided to set off on a journey…”

Seto smiled sadly and, before Seina can change his mind, immediately told Kanemitsu to arrange for the special application to be made. Of course, the veil of her acting remained hidden throughout the entire process.

Meanwhile, Seina was filled with joy that his wish had come true.

“Thank you, Seto-sama!”

Seina couldn’t see it as he bowed deeply, but at that moment a devilish smile of amusement was on Seto’s face.

Everything had gone according to her plan.

Kanemitsu took a deep sigh and muttered, “…I was defeated by these hands too…”

Seina looked up, his eyes slightly moist with excitement.

Good luck, boy,” Kanemitsu chuckled to himself.

“It will take a while for us to respond to your request Seina-dono, so please stay the night.”

Seina was accompanied by Seto and Kanemitsu as they walked along the road at sunset, which still didn’t look like they were on a ship. The scale of the trees was different, but the atmosphere was almost the same as being on Earth.

“What’s wrong? Is there something on my face?”

Seto smiled a little shyly as Seina stared intently at her profile.

“Oh, no, sorry…”

Confused by the mature adult’s reaction, Seina made an excuse to hide his embarrassment.

“Well, it kind of feels nostalgic… I felt the same way about Minaho.”

“Really? Well, maybe because Minaho is Tenchi-chan’s aunt… so maybe that’s why?”

“Wha?”

He thought he heard “Tenchi-chan.”

“Oh, haven’t you ever thought about it? The reason why you came to space was because of the pamphlet you got at Tenchi’s house, right?”

“Oh, right…”

Seto’s words reminded him of that time.

He remembered that Amane left him a package for Tenchi. That meant that Amane invited Seina to join the GP when she was at Tenchi’s place.

Her first goal was to recruit Tenchi.

It was a simple thing, but Seina hadn’t realized it until now.

“Haha. I guess it makes sense after all the fuss.”

This brought up many questions. How was Tenchi connected to the universe?

“So, then, Tenchi-senpai is also an alien?!”

“He was born and raised on Earth. But that’s a matter of course…” Seto smiled gently.

Well, if you thought about it, it was weird to ask ‘Are you an alien’? In space. Even an Earthling like Seina was an ‘alien’ in the eyes of Seto and Kanemitsu.

However, who would have thought that Tenchi and Minaho were related?

“Oh yeah. Do you know the two sisters that live at Tenchi’s, Aeka and Sasami?”

“Yes, I know them well. I often see them in Kai’s village.”

“Those two… Hehe, they’re my grandchildren.”

“Huh?”

Another confusing line. Judging from Seto’s appearance, she could be Aeka’s older sister, and Sasami was the youngest. But they were her grandchildren.

“No way… Whoa!?”

Seina was so startled that he lost his footing, and his foot got caught on a tree root that extended just above the ground, causing him to fall and tumble down the bank.

“Ow… I let my guard down.”

Seina, who had briefly forgotten about his own bad luck, would occasionally be hit by misfortune like this ‘warning’.

“Seina-dono!”

Seto and Kanemitsu quickly ran down the stairs after him.

“Are you okay? Are you hurt anywhere?”

Seto took out a handkerchief and began wiping Seina's muddy face.

"It's okay… I'm used to it"

"!"

At that moment, Seto's hand suddenly stopped moving as she saw Seina smiling shyly, and she began to stare intently at him.

Both Seina and Kanemitsu look at Seto curiously at her actions.

"Heh… heh heh heh." After a moment of silence, Seto began laughing.

"Um, well…"

"Sorry…. Hehe, you look nice now."

With that, Seto picked up Seina as easily as if he were a child and helped him to his feet.

"Come on, your escorts here."

"Huh?"

When he turned around, he saw Hakuren and the other ladies-in-waiting standing there, having arrived without anyone noticing.

"I'll leave the rest to you."

"Understood. Now, Seina-sama."

Hakuren bowed to Seto and invited Seina along.

"Ah… yes."

Seina was confused, but he bowed to Seto and was escorted by the ladies-in-waiting to the guesthouse.

"…Heh, heh, heh, heh…"

—After seeing Seina and the others off until they were out of sight, Seto couldn't contain her laughter and began laughing.

"What's wrong?"

When Kanemitsu spoke to her in a creepy tone, Seto replied with a smile on her face.

"Looking at his muddy face, I remembered. I met him once."

"Oh. You mean at Yosho's?"

"Yes. When Seina was younger… yes, he was that child."

“Ah…”

Kanemitsu could only look puzzled at Seto, who was smiling with genuine joy. It had been a long time since he’d seen Seto like this, with a genuine smile.

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry……”

When Seina arrived at the guesthouse accompanied by the ladies-in-waiting, the first thing he saw was Mitoto, kneeling in front of the phone and apologizing profusely.

“……What is she doing?”

Seina asked Hakuren curiously, as it was hard to imagine Mitoto acting this way since she was always so calm and composed.

“Well… I don’t know the principle behind it… well, to be honest, I don’t know what it is, but Mitoto-sama has a special skill or habit of unconsciously getting into anywhere while cleaning. Anyway, she has that ability.”

It was a vague explanation, unusual for Hakuren, but Seina, who had been tormented by the vague idea of misfortune, understood it all too well.

Well, the point was, no matter how tightly guarded the place was, no matter how state-of-the-art security was implemented, or even if it was a secret place no one knew about, before you know it, Mitoto was there, mop in hand, cleaning.

“The GP ship that Seina was aboard was probably boarded while it was being cleaned at HQ. By the time she was discovered, it had probably already sailed past the point of no return.” Hakuren said sincerely.

“I see… so that’s why Onnainin-san was desperately trying to stop her from cleaning.”

“So, she’s currently speaking with her family, who were worried about her…”

“You little girl, I told you to contact me if you went to a place you don’t know at all, you know that!”

The person on the other end must have been very worried, because even Seina could hear the angry yelling coming from the receiver, clearly audible from a distance.

Mitoto had shrunk so small it was almost pitiful, and all she could do was apologize profusely.

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry!”

“Seina-chan, I got scolded~~~”

“Yes, yes.”

After about 30 minutes of being thoroughly scolded, Mitoto was finally released and cried to Seina. Mitoto’s shoulders were shaking violently, and Seina was stroking her head to comfort her. It was hard to tell who was the adult and who was the child.

What was more, perhaps for some soothing effect, Mitoto patted Seina’s short haircut in return, making the composition even more puzzling.

“Oh dear.”

He was treated almost like a pet or a stuffed animal. Then Hakuren came to call them.

“Seina-sama、Mitoto-sama. It’s time to eat.”

“Ah, yes. But…”

Seina looked at Hakuren as if asking for help. Mitoto clung tightly to Seina and sobbed, showing no signs of stopping for a while.

However, Hakuren just smiled as if to say it was okay.

“Mitoto-sama, we’ll have pudding for dessert.”

“Eh, pudding?” Mitoto suddenly looked up. Her voice sounded so happy.

Hakuren nodded gently, still smiling gently.

“Yes. Please come to the dining room.”

“Yes!”

Mitoto jumped to her feet with a bright, carefree smile on her face and ran off to the dining room as if she couldn’t wait any longer.

“……”

Seina could only stand there in shock at the drastic change.

“Come on, Seina-sama.”

“Ah…”

Hakuren led Seina out of the room.

“Maybe it would have been quicker to just lure her with pudding from the start…” He muttered, picking at his clothes, damp with Mitoto’s tears.

“If Seina-sama hadn’t comforted her, things would have been a lot worse.”

“Worse?”

“You’ll see soon. Now, before you eat, get changed.”

After changing clothes, they were shown to the dining room, which was a terrace jutting out into the lake behind the guesthouse.

The slightly cool breeze was pleasant.

“Whoa…”

Seina couldn’t help but exclaim in admiration at the view from the terrace.

The sky was filled with stars.

The lake reflected it.

The view was just fantastic. He remembered seeing a beautiful starry sky when he stayed over at Tenchi’s house as a child, but this was even better.

“This is a far cry from what I’m used to.”

Because of Seina, eating out was impossible for the Yamada household.

“Huh? But wasn’t that giant tree up there…?”

No matter how much he looked up at the sky, he couldn’t see the silhouette of the branches that should be there.

“Seina-sama, over there.”

“?”

Hakuren pointed to a chandelier-like lighting fixture. It was Jurai-style, perhaps. They were found throughout Mikagami, and all had a unified, natural design. The one Hakuren was pointing to was decorated with trunks and leaves, like ivy entwined around a pillar.

“It matches the decorations here. It looks like a tree branch. Is there something about that?”

“That’s not manmade. It’s ripe fruit that’s shining.”

“What?”

If you looked closely, you could see that they were just like natural objects, no matter how you looked at them, touched them, or smelled them. The soft light was heatless, like fluorescent light, and the ripe fruits were bright, while the immature fruits glowed faintly.

These were all living, growing lights.

“These lighting fixtures used in everyday life are not artificially created through genetic manipulation or other means. They are native species that produce glowing fruit that have been selectively bred to increase brightness, the speed at which the fruit ripens, and the duration of its life after ripening.”

“So, does it actually grow naturally?”

“Yes. This original species grows naturally within the World Tree, and it shines like a star, hiding the silhouette of the World Tree’s branches.”

In other words, that giant tree was like a giant Christmas tree.

Moreover, if you looked closely at the scenery, you could certainly see similar particles of light in the mountains and fields. All of these particles of light must be the primeval fruit that Hakuren had described.

“Jurai is a planet where a wide variety of plants have evolved.”

“I see,” Seina nodded. At that exact moment, Gyokuren walked over.

“Now, drink up.”

Gyokuren poured an amber liquid into Seina’s cup.

“Ah, I don’t drink alcohol…”

“I know. This is juice made from a certain fruit, so don’t worry.”

“Well then, I’ll drink it.”

He took a small sip.

“……delicious”

The juice was the best he had ever tasted. It had a slight carbonation to it, giving it a pleasant tingling sensation that seemed to seep into his body.

“Please have another. This is a special gift from Seto-sama.”

“From Seto-sama?”

After Seina finished drinking, his glass was refilled.

Hakuren said, standing next to Gyokuren.

“This is the first time we’ve seen this being served to guests.”

“Really… what is it?”

Seina stared at the glass in disbelief.

—Unbeknownst to him, the juice from Seto came from the fruit of the Royal Trees. Most of the time it was made into fruit wine, but because of its rarity, even the royal family could not drink it all the time. In addition, outside of the royal family, only one bottle was sent as a gift each year to a special guest or to the head of state of each country. In the past, a bottle of the fruit wine was once sold at an auction, and the price was said to be almost equivalent to the price of a habitable planet.

Of course, such an exceptional product did not have a fixed market value, but when it came to a special juice rather than a fruit wine, it was entirely conceivable that the glass that Seina was drinking now might be enough to buy an entire continent.

"…it's really delicious"

"Haha. I'm glad you liked it."

Just this one juice was proof of how well-received Seina was by Seto, but in fact it wasn't Seina himself who Seto wanted to show this to.

The four ladies-in-waiting stared at Seina as he sipped the juice without realizing what was going on.

A different light was beginning to dwell in their eyes than when they first met on the GP ship.

"Come on, Seina. Please enjoy your meal before it gets cold."

"Yes, thank you."

Although Seina didn't understand the various dishes that were served one after the other, most of them were truly delicious and were things that most people would never be able to taste in their lifetime.

"Pudding-san♡"

Poke, jiggle.

Next to Seina, Mitoto happily poked at her dessert pudding with a spoon.

"Yay! It's so bouncy♡"

"… I'm glad for you."

Seina couldn't help but smile wryly at her innocence. By the way, the pudding Mitoto was playing with was her 30th. At this rate, she could have probably eaten more.

"If Seina hadn't comforted me, I would have ended up eating this in desperation."

"……I see"

If this was the amount she could eat under normal circumstances, there was no telling what would happen if she were to eat it in desperation.

“Mitoto-sama, it looks like it will take some time, so why don’t we leave first? If you don’t mind, how about going for a walk after dinner?”

Hakuren suggested, as she felt sorry for Seina who had finished his share of pudding and was bored. It would probably take a long time for Mitoto to be satisfied, and it certainly felt good to wander around a place like this. The night breeze felt good, and the private space of the royal family was something he would rarely see again.

“That’s right… I’ll be off then.”

As Seina started to walk away, Hakuren followed alongside him.

“Then I will accompany you.”

“What?”

Hakuren looked at Seina with a slightly embarrassed look on her face. It didn’t look like she was being forced to do it because someone had told her to.

“Um, well, but…” Seina stammered, dropping his gaze to the ground in confusion.

Of course, it’s not that he was bothered, just confused.

After all, he had almost no experience walking alone with a woman, so it was only natural that he would be on guard even when just going for a walk.

Eventually, seeing Seina’s attitude, Hakuren bowed deeply with sadness in her eyes.

“…If you would prefer to be alone, I will take my leave. I apologize for disturbing you.”

“Oh, no, you’re not in the way…”

Of course, it was not his intention to make her sad, but Hakuren seemed to take Seina’s efforts as sympathy and her eyes became even lonelier.

The light of the glowing fruit sparkled in his eyes.

“…Are you sure I’m not bothering you…?”

“Yes, it’s true. If you don’t mind, I’d be happy to for you to show me around.”

With those words, the smile returned to her face.

“Yes! If you’d like me to help you!”

Hakuren left the other ladies and followed Seina towards the river.

When they left the guesthouse, it was quite bright thanks to the glittering fruit everywhere. In Earth terms, the amount of light was about the same as a night lit by a full moon.

At first, he thought the river was just a small stream, but when he got to the shore, he realized it was larger than expected. It was shallow, the flow was gentle, and the water was crystal clear. He could clearly see each stone on the riverbed sparkling like a jewel.

If he sat on the riverbank and looked closely, he could see small fish swimming around.

Downstream, a mother and her six-legged horse-like children were drinking together.

It was so atmospheric that you might even forget where you were.

"… How peaceful…" Seina muttered to himself.

Even if you listened carefully, all you can hear was the gentle sound of the wind, the rustling of the river, and the sound of the birds chirping. That's right. Buu buu buu, buu buu buu……

"…What is that!?" He turned around and saw a giant nose.

"……Ah……"

Bump!

The next moment, Seina was pushed into the river by the 'nose'.

He looked up from the river, drenched.

—A large, caterpillar-like pig was gazing at Seina in a friendly manner.

"Buu buu"

"…Hold on…"

The water was quite cold.

"Are you all right, Seina-sama?"

"What?"

Hearing the voice, he looked next to him and saw Hakuren, who had fallen into the river just like Seina. Needless to say, Seina had dragged her in.

"I'm sorry. She didn't mean any harm. She was just messing around…"

Once on land, with water dripping from her hair and her entire body, Hakuren said apologetically. However, it was Seina who was really apologetic.

"Oh no! I'm sorry I got you into this ……."

"No, I'm sorry, I'm the one who has to protect Seina-sama.

“I’m sorry.”

“I’m sorry.”

“I’m sorry.”

“I’m sorry.”

After apologizing to each other, Seina sighed deeply.

He never thought he would fall into a river in a spaceship, but aside from that, it was just bad luck. There was no point in saying anything about it now. What made Seina feel even more depressed was that he had involved other people again.

(Seto-sama said that I would be welcomed by the GP as well…)

Hakuren smiled at Seina, who was feeling gloomy.

“I’ve heard you’ve had bad luck… is it always like this?”

“…Yes. I’m always causing trouble for other people…”

“Oh, you poor thing……”

Then, as if she was thinking deeply about something, she stopped moving. She didn’t say a word, like a frozen computer. It was doubtful she was even breathing.

“…Um, hello…?”

A few minutes had passed. Seina waited for a while for the next words, but then he became worried and timidly tapped Hakuren on the shoulder.

“Hey, Hakuren-san? Hakuren-san!”

“……got it!”

“Whoa!”

He looked up and Hakuren suddenly restarted.

Then, she spoke these words to the surprised Seina:

“I understand. I will always protect you, Seina-sama!”

“Huh?”

The words were so sudden that Seina was unable to understand the intention or meaning behind them and almost froze up.

“……Ha, ha, ahchoo!”

However, a sneeze caused by being wet and exposed to the night air brought not only Seina but also Hakuren back to reality.

“Oh no! Please hurry up and get changed! Please wait a moment!”

Saying that in a flustered manner, Hakuren ran back towards the guesthouse at an incredible speed. Her speed was so extraordinary that it made Seina wonder if she had an acceleration device attached to her.

“Sorry to keep you waiting. Come on over here.”

“Oh, you’re back already?!”

That was fast. Even though they were quite far from the guest house, not even a minute has passed yet.

“We are specially bio-engineered.”

As she said this to a stunned Seina, Hakuren removed his wet T-shirt and began busily wiping his body.

“Um… I can do that by myself.”

Seina said embarrassed and looked away, but Hakuren didn’t seem to mind and continued working.

“That’s all right.”

Those words brought to mind an image of Kiriko.

“Now, take off your pants.”

As she said this, Hakuren put her hands on the waistband of Seina’s pants.

This time, Seina instantly jumped back with speed as if he had an accelerator.

“I-I’ll do the rest myself!”

“That’s not going to work.”

Hakuren continued to approach Seina with a gentle attitude, even though he blushed and refused.

In an attempt to somehow escape this happy - but for him embarrassing - situation, Seina quickly looked at Hakuren’s clothes.

“More importantly, Hakuren, you’ll also be in trouble if you stay wet!”

“Oh… I’m sorry, I didn’t notice. It’s really embarrassing to take care of you in this outfit.”

With that said, Hakuren began to take off her clothes right there.

“Whoa, whoa! Stop, stop, stop, please, not here, not here!”

Seina felt his ears getting hot and frantically grabbed Hakuren’s hand.

“Why?”

“Because it would be embarrassing if someone saw you!”

“This is Seto-sama’s private space. No one will see us.”

“I, I’m here!”

Seina was on the verge of tears. Hakuren finally came back to her senses after hearing those words.

“Ah… I’m sorry. I got carried away.”

He didn’t know how she could become so carried away that she started taking off her clothes in front of a man she just met, but this was probably just the result of her being so devoted to her job.

Anyway, he managed to get out of this embarrassing situation.

At that moment, Seina let out a sigh of relief.

“Umm.”

Suddenly, he heard a faint voice in his ear.

“Woah!!”

He was shocked. He was really shocked.

Before he knew it, one of the ladies-in-waiting, Suiren, was standing right next to him. Both Mitoto and Gyokuren had approached him without making their presence known a few times before, but no matter how many times it happened, it was still bad for his heart.

However, in Mitoto’s case, the incident took place indoors. This was by the river, where there was nowhere to hide.

“When did you arrive?”

“I’m sorry for startling you. I’ve been standing beside you for about five minutes now…”

No way. Five minutes ago, Hakuren had just returned at an abnormally speed.

No matter how surprised he was, there was no way he wouldn't have noticed if there was someone nearby. Confused as to whether his senses were off, Seina heard Hakuren speak.

According to her explanation, Suiren was a girl with a faint presence and little sense of self. She was there, but no one recognized her as Suiren.

Also known as the 'natural stealth girl', she had many anecdotes, such as the time she sat down for two hours at a completely unrelated family party without anyone noticing anything strange about her.

"If you let your guard down like now, even Seto-sama might not notice you. That's no good, Suiren. Surprise Seina-sama."

Just as he was about to show some concern for Suiren, who was hanging her head in apology, he heard a different voice, this time from directly behind him.

"Hakuren. I brought you a change of clothes, so please don't be too upset."

"Ahhh!" Again, Seina stiffened in shock.

It was Gyokuren. Seeing his face, Hakuren said in a troubled voice.

"Now even Gyokuren is in trouble. I'm sorry, Seina-sama. We don't mean any harm."

(You're in trouble, too.) Seina swallowed those words.

"What are you both doing?"

At that moment, someone could be heard yelling from far away.

After Hakuren, Suiren, and Gyokuren… Yes, the voice belonged to Karen.

Apparently she couldn't kill her presence. Seina felt relieved.

"How long is it going to take to deliver Hakuren's clothes?"

In the dim light, her bright white teeth were striking.

Hakuren asked her curiously. "Hey Karen, how's the surveillance on Mitoto going?"

"You know, Hakuren, no matter how hard you try, there's no way you can keep an eye on Mitoto one-on-one!" Karen replied in a slightly angry voice.

In other words, that couldn't be…

"That's right! I'll search the north, Hakuren go west, and Suiren go south! Gyokuren, return to the guesthouse and take care of Seina-sama and relay any messages! She may return unexpectedly, just like she did at noon! Now, spread out!"

Giving quick instructions, Karen headed north.

Hakuren and Suiren also disappeared into the darkness like ninjas.

To be honest, Karen was cool because she acted so quickly.

“…She seems the most normal…”

Gyokuren chuckled at the truth he’d accidentally blurted out.

“Heh. You say clearly what is hard to say.”

“Oh my goodness, did I say it out loud?! I’m so sorry…”

“But it’s true, so there’s nothing we can do about it.”

“Hahaha…”

He was relieved to see that she didn’t seem to mind too much.

“Now, Seina-sama, the bath is ready, so let’s go back to the guesthouse.”

Seina had a robe-like garment draped over his shoulders and returned to the house with Gyokuren.

“…The water is so nice…”

The hot spring bath, constructed from huge stones and wood, was unnecessarily large for one person, but it provided a feeling of spaciousness and slowly soothed Seina's mind and body, which had been exhausted from the day's experiences.

An indescribably pleasant scent, similar to that of cypress on Earth, tickled his nose.

(It’s been a long day), Seina thought. The experiences so far could easily be written into a novel.

“…Seina-sama.”

“Huh?”

The sudden voice broke Seina’s moment of relief.

Gyokuren came in from behind the bushes that were blocking his view, her thighs bare and only wearing a thin cloth wrapped around her.

“Gyo-Gyokuren-san…!”

“I’ll wash your back”

Smiling, Gyokuren slowly approached him.

Even if it was Seina, he would learn something if he was subjected to this many sex appeal attacks in succession. He would gain the composure to not lose his cool, and would also learn how to deal with the situation.

…Well, he still couldn't control his body, but that's because he's young.

Anyway, Seina took a deep breath and tried to calm his rapidly beating heart. Furthermore, breaking the rule of not getting into the bathtub with a towel, he had covered himself.

(Okay, now I'm ready for battle…)

The moment he thought that, Gyokuren's face was right in front of him.

"How can I help you?"

He spent too much time getting into fighting mode.

While Seina was trying to compose himself, Gyokuren had silently entered his absolute defense zone.

"No, um, I, um!"

As Seina frantically tried to run away, Gyokuren grabbed his shoulder firmly.

—I can't move.

She must have undergone the biological conditioning that Hakuren had mentioned. She was unexpectedly strong for a woman with such slender arms.

Gyokuren looked straight into Seina's face, gazing at him with eyes like magic that drew people in.

"…is this your first time?"

"Wha, wha, what…?"

He couldn't take it anymore… He was almost crying.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I…"

No matter how much he tried to look away, Gyokuren's eyes pierced right to his heart.

There was nothing he could do. He couldn't escape. That's when Seina realized.

"……I'm very sorry"

Suddenly, the pressure he had been feeling up until then disappeared as if by magic.

"I scared you a bit…"

Was this the same Gyokuren as before? She had the same kind and gentle eyes as when she sent him off to Seto earlier.

“I heard that you and Kiriko are not lovers.”

“…”

Seina couldn’t say anything. He felt as if all his dignity as a man had been stripped away. He felt as if he had been made aware of just how insignificant he really was.

But strangely, he didn’t feel any humiliation because Gyokuren’s expression was so gentle.

“Seto-sama… No, we have high hopes for Seina-sama.”

“Expectations?”

“Yes.”

Gently, she placed her hand on Seina with such gentleness that he was not surprised.

There was no lie in what Gyokuren had said. It was a warmth that was obvious without any explanation.

—Today is a good day—.

It was the first time in Seina’s life that he felt confident in himself.

The moment he closed his eyes and savored the joy, he felt his head being lightly shaken.

“…Huh?”

“Seina-sama?” Gyokuren’s surprised voice came from afar.

The warm bath and Gyokuren’s words released the tension that had been building up in Seina, and he became so hot that he passed out.

It was a pleasant faint.

—Mikagami living space/World Tree—

A sky full of stars—a dark room.

Mirror Seto—Seto.

— I hear you met him before.

“You know me… but I don’t know you”

—…….

“That’s my only memory.”

—Just yours?

“Yes, it’s mine alone…the only one.”

---It's painful.

“Just…happy”

Early the next morning.

The GP ship, having received emergency repairs from the Seventh Sentinel Fleet’s supply ship, slowly left the dock where the supply ship was attached, with Mikagami seeing them off.

“Thank you, thank you so much”

Onnainin bowed deeply to Seto on the monitor.

“Please deliver Mitoto-sama and Seina-dono safely.”

“Yes, I will.”

“I’ll talk to Mitoto-sama again sometime. And, Seina-dono.” Seto on the monitor smiled brightly. “Please do your best.”

“Y… yes!”

The GP ship departed, carrying Seina’s joy and his desire for further space exploration.

The destination, of course, was Galaxy Academy.

After undergoing immigration screening, Seina would officially become a student at GP Academy.

“…Now that I think of it…”

After seeing the GP ship off from the bridge of Mikagami, Minaho suddenly realized something.

“Seto-sama, weren’t you supposed to recruit him to join us?”

“It’s okay. I don’t want to take away her fun.”

“Are you looking forward to it?”

“Yes ♪”

She said that, but in the end it was obvious that she was the one who wanted to have the most fun.

By not keeping him in her possession, she was planning to pull strings behind the scenes. And Seto loved to do that.

(I guess she'll be playing with him for a while… well, the first victim is asleep right now.)

Thinking of Seina and the other women around her, Minaho sighed deeply along with Kanemitsu.

Now…

On the bridge of the GP ship that had just completed its jump to head for the Academy, the crew was stunned by an alarm of 'approaching pirates'.

"Wha… why?!" Onnainin slumped his shoulders in disappointment.

"……sorry." Seina could only bow his head as the crew members gave him cold stares.

In any case, blaming Seina wouldn't solve anything, and the crew went about their business with sour looks on their faces.

"Radar check, only one pirate ship!"

"What is this…? Captain! We are receiving a communication from a pirate ship requesting direct negotiations."

"What? What did you say?"

Onnainin was shocked. Pirates should have just attacked without asking for permission - no, that's not right - but they said they wanted to negotiate directly, to talk, although they didn't know what their purpose was.

"What so they want…?"

It was even creepier since the other person's intentions were unclear.

"Pirate ship data collation complete, oho!"

Suddenly, the operator's cheerful voice rang out. There was no trace of the anxiety or bad mood he had had earlier. He sounded overjoyed, like his wish came true.

"What's going on? Report!"

Although confused by the sudden change in behavior, Onnainin gave the order.

"…Everyone, don't be shocked when you hear this! Identification code F172, 65207R! That means it's Ryoko Balta's ship!"

The voice sounded almost like a scream, and the entire crew on the bridge stood up.

“Whaaaat?!”

The bridge was in a frenzy. It was so loud it was like a festival.

The only ones who are stunned were Seina and Onnainin.

“Okay, send a message saying we are willing to negotiate directly!”

Without even bothering to check with Onnainin, operator Alan started to take charge of the situation. Cohen, the crew member he instructed to respond began typing happily.

“Alan, can I put a heart at the end of this sentence?”

“I’ll allow it! Or rather, I’ll actively add it!”

“What do you call Ryoko? San? Sama? Chama?”

“I think chama would be good. No, “Ryonryon” would be good too.”

“You idiot, it’s definitely Ryokotan.”

“Let’s start off with a greeting of ‘To my beloved Ryoko-chan!’“

“No, it’s “Love & Dream DEAR Ryokotan”!”

“Hey, hold on a second, guys!”

The crew was happily giving whatever orders they liked. No one heard Onnainin’s panicked voice.

“Okay, now that I’ve sent our reply, let’s get ready to pick her up!”

“Yay!”

“No, no way!”

As the crew prepared to leave the bridge, Onnainin blocked their way.

“This ship belongs to the GP after all! It’s absolutely unacceptable for it to host pirates!”

Even though he was a bit timid, he was the captain after all. He knew when to be strict. The power of his statement caused the excited crew to fall completely silent…or so you would think.

“…Hii.”

The gaze of the crew, united by a single purpose, contained such madness that it froze Onnainin in an instant.

—A few hours before that.

Ryoko's ship was monitoring the GP ship, which had left the Juraian fleet and begun sailing independently.

Ryoko knew very well how dangerous this was, but she couldn't get the scene she saw the previous day out of her head.

"What does this mean…?" The operator who had come up to the captain's chair to make the report muttered.

"Have you determined the target ship's course?"

"It is definitely a ship from the frontier. The route is normal. However…"

"However?"

"Just before the incident yesterday, it seems that it deviated from its planned route."

"Did it now? Do you know where it went?" Ryoko's expression became grim.

"According to phase monitoring... they went to a planet in the early stages of civilization in the Jurai Special Protection Zone."

"!" Ryoko's eyes turned to certainty.

"Could this a new Juraian weapon?"

The adjutant, who had been listening in silence, said, "But why are they sailing solo again? After all that trouble. To conduct tests…"

"Right…" Ryoko pondered the question.

—The operator's point was certainly a reasonable one. After all that fuss, the Juraian fleet had gone into hiding and was gathering in large numbers to capture the pirates. In that kind of space, there was no way anyone would be fooled by a decoy again.

(Except for those who are interested in pursuing it, of course...)

"Captain, should we assume that the weapon has been transferred to the Juraian fleet?"

The deputy chief answered the operator's question and expressed his opinion.

—Well, that's a reasonable idea. But the question is what to do next…

"If that's the case, then there be any traces left behind on that ship… But it was an object of great power. If we can get even the slightest clue…"

"I thought it was a trap. After all, we're talking about The Demon Princess…"

The adjutant had just about reached that point.

“Oh, crap!”

A voice, almost a shriek of agitation, rises from the operator.

“What is it?”

“A message from… The Demon Princess of Jurai!”

The next moment, the bridge froze with tension.

“…Is it really okay to welcome pirates into the ship?”

“It’s okay, it’s fine! It’s totally OK!”

“Really…?”

As Onnainin moaned, Seina muttered quietly while watching the home delivery box move slightly.

The bridge had completely changed, and all the screens and monitors were now showing out-of-focus photos of Ryoko Balta, but they were so out of focus that he couldn’t really tell what she looked like. He could just make out that she was a woman.

But the crew didn’t care and were having a great time. Small flags and fans with Ryoko’s name on them were waving, and the guards, dressed in matching headbands and happi coats, were practicing their calls. Over here, glow-in-the-dark glow sticks were being handed out.

It was exactly like being in the audience right before an idol concert.

“What's going on here...?”

Alan grabbed Seina’s shoulders, who could only look on in shock.

“Seina, I knew it from the beginning. Your talent is truly amazing!”

The other crew members all nodded in unison.

“Oh… is that so?… Umm… Operator-san.”

Thinking about it carefully, Seina had no recollection of hearing the names of the operators. And, to his horror, he couldn’t remember hearing Onnainin’s name either.

“I’m Alan. The skinny one over there is Barry, and the fat one is Cohen. By the way, what was the captain’s name again?” The short operator, who called himself Alan, tilted his head.

“I just call him Kancho…” Barry tilted his head as well.

“Well, it doesn’t really matter if you don’t know, so it doesn’t really matter.” Cohen said simply.

“That’s true.”

Apparently that was the case.

“Is that so… is that okay?”

“It’s fine, it’s fine. But more importantly, it seems you still don’t realize just how much good fortune your talent has brought you… Well, that’s understandable. Just take a look!”

Alan pointed at the main screen in an exaggerated manner, and the photo of a face that looked like Ryoko was suddenly replaced by a real-time image of a pirate ship.

“She is 3rd place in the All GP Idol Ranking!”

“A pirate?”

“That’s right! There are three thousand three hundred and eighty-nine official fan clubs, and it’s said that there are ten times as many unofficial fan clubs, with the total number of members being approximately…”

“But it’s a pretty blurry photo.” Seina, looking at the monitor next to him, casually muttered a word that brought Alan’s passionate speech to a halt.

“…there isn’t one.”

“Huh?”

When Seina asked him again, Alan looked as if he was about to burst into tears.

“We don’t have one! Our GP Transport Department Q Block Ryoko-sama fan club, “Tokimeki Fleet”, doesn’t have a portrait of Ryoko-sama that shows her in a good light!”

“Huh?”

Alan began crying, and a tall operator, Barry, spoke on his behalf.

“When pirates attack, you rarely see their faces. They usually stop the ship, cut off the cargo containers and take them.”

“I see. So no one has any photos?”

“No, there is only one. We don’t know who took the photo, but we all became fans of Ryoko after just one look at it.”

It was true, it was hard to become a fan if you don’t even know what someone looked like.

“However, these precious photos, along with the originals, are monopolized by other major fan clubs, and are only available to their own members. And the membership fees are

ridiculously high. Their motives are impure.” Barry said disgustedly and stared at the photo on the monitor.

“This is a copy of a copy of a copy of that photo, taken secretly with a telephoto lens. This is still better than most clubs, who don’t get anything.”

Seina understood. It made sense then that it was so hard to make out the face.

“But pirates have their fans, and the GP that polices them also has a large fan club…”

“Our relationship is quite delicate.”

“Delicate?”

“I won’t go into the details, but there is an unspoken rule between us and the pirates.”

From the way Barry spoke, it seemed like something complicated was going on.

“…However, there are times and places where this is the case. While there are many who break the rules recklessly, Ryoko-sama always abides by the rules, never hurting anyone and never condoning stealing more than necessary. This is why she has so many fans in the GP, and according to accounts from witnesses, her demeanor is as delicate and gorgeous as a butterfly…” Barry said with a sigh, then turned to Seina.

“…Seina, that beautiful butterfly will soon be aboard our ship. Do you understand why we are so excited?”

“Haa…” Seina answered evasively.

Meanwhile, preparations to welcome Ryoko had been completed, and at Alan’s instructions, the GP ship “approached” Ryoko’s ship, fully opened the airlock on the side of the ship, and waited for the connection tube from Ryoko’s ship.

In other words, it was a statement of intent saying, “Please come on in.”

Just like how dogs rolled over and showed their bellies to show they're totally loyal, that's exactly how they felt. Being a little dog that Ryoko doted on is what made them so happy.

“…How should we judge this?” With a wry smile, Ryoko asked of no one in particular, sitting on the throne of her ship.

The lieutenant turned around and gave her a confused look. “I can’t really trust what the Demon Princess says.”

“Whether you trust her or not is up to you.” Ryoko smiled, remembering her communication with Seto a few hours earlier.

“—Nice to meet you. I’m Ryoko Balta, the captain of this ship.”

Ryoko bowed reverently to the screen.

It was a desperate effort to resist the charisma of the woman looking down at them with cool eyes – the Demon Princess of Jurai.

Seto’s appearance left everyone on the bridge speechless.

“So, what can I do for you?”

“The GP ship you’re pursuing is carrying a secret weapon.”

“What!?”

Ryoko could not hide her astonishment at being told so straightforwardly what she needed to know. She felt like she was dancing in the palm of Seto’s hand.

“Just to clarify, it’s not something we or the Academy created.”

“…Why are you telling me this?” Ryoko asked, desperately trying to figure out what Seto really meant.

Seto was silent for a moment, then said: “I'm counting on you.”

—I don’t understand it.

Ryoko was not just a pirate who looked good but couldn't do anything. She was a top-notch pirate who possessed both calmness and boldness, wisdom and courage, and guts, and was the only one to escape Seina's curse. Naturally, she was confident that she would not lose even if she was subjected to psychological warfare.

But she couldn’t understand it. Was this the person really Seto?

“You think I’m going to …… do what you want me to do?”

“Things don’t always work out the way you want them to.”

Ryoko thought to herself as she watched Seto smile brightly, (This must be what a devil looks like.) At this point, she was on the verge of defeat and was being completely looked down upon.

(…I can’t back down like this.)

The anger that erupted from this finally helped Ryoko regain her composure.

“So you give your enemy a chance… is that okay? Or am I not worthy of being your enemy?”

“No, I’m the one being tested. But, I have a feeling this is going to be interesting.”

“So you’re just playing around by throwing pebbles into the water?”

“Well, yeah.” Seto readily agreed.

“So what are my benefits as a pirate?”

“Oh, that power isn’t enough?”

“You seem convinced that we can’t get it.” As she said that, for some reason Ryoko’s expression looked happy.

“…So, are you dissatisfied with the hotline with Kamiki Seto Jurai?”

“Okay, let’s have both then.”

“Hehe. I’m looking forward to it.” Seto smiled and the call ended as the screen retracted.

At the same time, the entire bridge crew, except for Ryoko and the adjutant, collapsed to the ground.

“She’s a monster…”

One of the crew members muttered, and that was the sentiment shared by everyone there.

Although she pretended to be calm, Ryoko felt a chill run down her neck.

“Are you going after all?”

As the docking gate door lock changed from red to green, the adjutant checked with Ryoko again to confirm her intentions.

“Yeah. Doesn’t that sound fun?”

The voice sounded like a child’s.

Ryoko felt no sense of mission or responsibility; only pure curiosity dominated her.

“If a weapon like that were used, not only would we be wiped out, but the Da Ruma Guild itself could be wiped out. I understand that we must risk our lives to investigate what is on that GP ship.”

The real Captain Ryoko would surely think that way - or so the adjutant hoped.

(If not, you’re obsessed with The Demon Princess.)

The adjutant felt that Ryoko was in a very precarious position. In all their years together, this was the first time he had seen her like this.

“Are you… worried?”

“Huh?!”

“You think I was mind-controlled by the Demon Princess?”

“Th-that’s…”

The aide realized in that moment that those few minutes of interaction had dramatically changed something about Ryoko.

As she said, it wasn’t mind control, but something else… something that may seem trivial now, but would have important implications for the future.

“Everyone else, wait until further orders.”

“But! … No, I understand.”

Although shaken, the adjutant desperately tried to regain his composure.

Ryoko, accompanied by her adjutant, walked through the connecting tube between her ship and the GP ship.

Katoon, kataoon, kataoon, kataoon, kataoon, kataoon,

Katoon, kataoon, kataoon, kataoon, kataoon, kataoon…

Ryoko walked gracefully down the completely deserted corridor, eyes fixed to the front.

In front of her was her adjutant who acted as her shield.

(……Heh)

The only one exuding more tension than necessary was the adjutant.

This fact seemed strange to Ryoko.

Meanwhile, Seina and the crew were waiting for Ryoko to arrive on the pitch-black bridge.

“Are you keeping proper records?”

How many times had Alan asked this anxious question?

“Perfect! This is amazing!”

Checking the monitor that showed where Ryoko seemed to be, Barry repeated the same answer, trying desperately to suppress the excitement that he couldn’t hide.

“Cohen, are you ready?”

“Check, all green!” Cohen, a little on the chubby side, answered, his check call sounded even more clear-spoken and passionate than his regular job.

"…Here she comes, everyone stand by!" Alan's directions were brisk and comfortable, filled with tension and anticipation.

(… Somehow, it's better than Onnainin…)

Seina looked back at the home delivery box, which was still jiggling, and felt a little guilty.

At that moment, together with a light that burned his eyes that had grown accustomed to the darkness, the entrance doors slid open and two figures entered the bridge.

Ryoko Balta and her adjutant.

In the pitch blackness of the bridge, the lieutenant stood ready to protect Ryoko.

(Four people… no, five people)

However, Ryoko herself didn't sense any danger. There was no sign of anything obvious, no murderous intent. Incidentally, the reason there was one more person was because she sensed a presence from inside the box in the corner of the room.

(This is more dangerous than that.)

At that moment, Ryoko held back the deputy's gun.

"Welcome, Ryoko!"

Pin spots shone on Ryoko along with the theme song composed by Alan.

—A few minutes later.

Ryoko was seated at a receiving table hastily set up on the bridge, where she was greeted enthusiastically by the GP crew.

Certainly, she knew that she was somehow called the 'Idol Pirate'. She also knew that her popularity extended to the GP. Still, as long as it didn't interfere with her pirate business, she didn't care about what others thought of her.

However, seeing this situation honestly made her worried about the organization called the GP.

"I wonder if this is okay….Hmm?"

Ryoko, who felt a sense of discomfort bordering on disgust at the excitement of the moment, suddenly noticed a boy watching the scene with a puzzled look on his face amid the revelry of the crew.

The boy clearly stood out from the rest of the room - he too must have felt uncomfortable in that atmosphere. But strangely, that made her feel a sense of closeness to him.

“Heh.”

It was a small favor.

Perhaps noticing Ryoko's gaze, the boy happened to meet her eyes, and blushing, he bowed.

(Oh, my, he’s adorable.)

His politeness was appealing, and his embarrassment was a nice touch. But it was a small thing that she probably wouldn’t have noticed if she hadn’t liked him in the first place. She had no way of realizing at the time that it would be a choice that would greatly change her fate later on.

Then a voice called out.

“Ryoko-san, welcome!”

Suddenly, the cozy atmosphere was replaced by an incredibly cheerful space.

“M-Mitoto-sama?!”

Suddenly, Mitoto appeared with a bouquet of flowers.

(That’s ridiculous! I’m sure…)

She looked around in shock. The presence she had felt earlier was that of five people. The three clowns repeating their silly dance over there, the boy, and the person probably inside the box in the corner of the room—the captain of this ship, no one else would allow such a commotion—there should have been only those five.

(I'm still so inexperienced... but if it's Mitoto-sama, I guess it can't be helped.)

Sighing in resignation, Ryoko stood up.

“It's been a long time. Thank you very much for your help back then.”

“Not at all. I was just cleaning the ship.”

“Do these two know each other?” Seina asked Alan, after the welcoming dance was finished, who was watching Mitoto present her with a bouquet of flowers.

“For Mitoto-sama, it’s entirely possible.” Alan crossed his arms and nodded sentimentally.

Apparently, Mitoto had accidentally boarded Ryoko's ship in the past. The crew didn't know it, but the lucky person who had taken the only photo of Ryoko, which was the ‘master piece’ of the entire fan club, was actually Mitoto.

“…Thank you all so much for your warm welcome. I would like to meet the captain of this ship.”

Ryoko thought that since the bouquet presentation was already over, there was no point in

putting up with any more of the commotion and wasting time, so she spoke up.

“I’m Alan, the acting captain.” Alan said as he stepped in front of Ryoko with a grinning expression that could not have been more inappropriate.

“I’m Barry, also acting captain.”

“I’m Cohen, acting captain, as well.”

Following Alan’s example, the other two took a step forward.

(…Oh dear. We might need to have a serious discussion about the quality of the GP.) Ryoko sighed, worried about her enemy.

Even though they looked at her with ulterior motives and called themselves acting captains, she didn’t feel like having a proper conversation with them. That being said, the real captain who was boxed in by these guys was also a bit of a mess. In that case, it didn’t really matter, and with their playful nature, they’d probably tell her anything she wanted to know without holding anything back.

“So, I would like to ask the three acting captains a question. I actually witnessed the operation to capture all the pirates yesterday…”

“It’s his fault!”

Before Ryoko could finish her question, Alan and the others immediately pointed at Seina.

“……what?”

Ryoko was surprised, as was Seina, who was the one being pointed at.

“He is the one who did that to Ryoko-san's friends!”

“Ah, well, um…thanks…”

Seina looked confused and scratched his cheek at Ryoko.

As Ryoko stared at Seina in shock, Seto’s words came back to her.

“I’m looking forward to it.”

—That. That… is that this?

With a click, the missing small gear snaps into place, and the great flow of time began to move.

Ryoko somehow sensed this.

Chapter Four: “Misty Daze, Rain that Never Comes

It looked like a birdcage floating in space.

“Finally, finally here…” Onnainin muttered with a haggard look on his face, full of emotion.

“Is that the Galaxy Academy?”

“That’s right”

The spherical cage, formed from multiple silver-thread-like rings, was floating in a flood of starlight like a fireworks display that was ten or twenty layers thick.

The GP ship carrying Seina, Mitoto and the others took a long, long, long detour, but had finally arrived at the Galaxy Academy.

“Even so, the return journey from Earth was scheduled to take just three days…” He never thought it would take a week - even though he didn’t say it aloud, Onnainin’s expression said it loudly.

“…I’m sorry. It’s my fault.”

“No, it’s okay. We managed to get here safely. But you know, if I told anyone about this voyage, they probably wouldn’t believe me, ha ha ha.” Onnainin laughed half-jokingly, half seriously.

That was only natural, since what was supposed to be just a short trip to pick up new recruits turned out to something that most people would never be able to experience, even if they compressed their entire life into one week, including a near miss during a jump, being chased by a horde of pirates, and being baptized by Jurai’s Demon Princess.

If he were to write a book about his experiences, it could become a bestseller, though he doubted it would be considered for non-fiction.

“Well, at the very least, this voyage record will undoubtedly set a new record for the number of hits to the database.”

Alan turned to face Onnainin, who was muttering sullenly.

“Captain, we have a communication from the control station. The flight schedule for Immigration Station 13 is full, so they’d like us to wait or head elsewhere.”

“It’s the time of year when new students are entering school, after all… If we’d arrived as planned, we’d have gotten here before the peak time, but it can’t be helped. Alan, do you know of any other gates that look like they might be open?”

“It seems like the situation is similar everywhere. It’ll be a bit of a detour, but it’ll be quicker to take the linear train from the transport ship’s relay port to the immigration block.”

The other crew members looked at Onnainin in agreement.

Around them were Ryoko Balta's photographs, not the blurry ..... ones, but the ones that clearly showed every pore. In short, they wanted quickly get rid of Seina and show off their treasures.

“However, this is his first time at the Academy. I must first show him around through the official front entrance.”

“By the way, the current wait time at the front gate is 15 hours.”

“Uh… but, but…”

“Um, I don’t mind. I don’t mind the front door, and I want to get to the GP Academy as quickly as possible…” Seina told Onnainin.

As soon as possible. That’s what he promised Ryoko too…

—At that time, Ryoko was surprised when she saw Seina.

She wondered how such a young boy could have toyed with so many pirates.

“Ryoko-tan, listen to me for a second. If this guy were to set up a random jump route, he would attract all your precious friends …”

Alan’s attitude towards Ryoko had evolved from a superhuman presence to best friends in just a few minutes. If things continued like this, they may evolve from lovers to husband and wife in just a few seconds.

(Seriously! This guy is just babbling important secrets to the enemy… That’s enough. I think I know what I need to know now.)

Perhaps it was as if they were in perfect harmony. The adjutant, sensing Ryoko’s feelings, thrust himself between her and the noisy speakers, acting as a wall.

Ryoko sighed softly, regaining her composure, and turned to look at the boy who was staring at her with a tense expression.

“May I ask your name? My name is Ryoko Balta.” With a gentle smile on her face, Ryoko

walked up to Seina.

"…I'm Yamada Seina."

Perhaps out of nervousness or fear of hostile pirates, Seina stared at Ryoko with glaring eyes.

"Seina-sama?"

When Seina heard his name, cries of jealousy rose from the crew… but they were behind the protective wall of the adjutant, so it did not reach Ryoko.

(Probably, this guy is…)

After hearing that Seina was responsible for this incident, Ryoko came to a decision.

He was a psychic whose probabilities were heavily biased, and just like Mitoto, his bias was on an extraordinary level.

(But why would the Demon Princess choose such an important person…?)

—I'm looking forward to it.

Suddenly, she was reminded of the words of Jurai's Demon Princess.

—I'm the one being tested…but I have a feeling it's going to be interesting.

"So …… that's how it works." Ryoko muttered softly.

If Seina sided with the GP, the Academy, or Jurai, he would have the power to cause great damage to pirates in the not-too-distant future… but at this point, that was still only a possibility.

(People with abilities like him are often crushed by their own strength. That's why they want to let him gain experience points… I'm one of them.)

—I'm looking forward to that.

Expectations. Seto certainly said that.

"…I never thought for a second that it would fail… Haha, that was expected of me."

Hearing this, Seina looked at Ryoko curiously.

There was no way that Seina could understand Ryoko's true intentions at this point.

(I guess I'm the one being tested…)

In other words, pirates and Jurai, Ryoko and Seto - who would he choose, or would he be chosen?

—That's fine… I'll give you a ride, Demon Princess.

Ryoko smiled and said, "…Seina-sama, I have a request. I'll do anything you want, so would you be willing to become my companion?"

"Whaaaaat?!"

The cry of surprise came not from Seina, but from Alan and his team. They all froze in shock in the same pose.

For a moment, complete silence enveloped the bridge.

Here's how they expressed their feelings:

Why is the world's greatest idol, my Ryoko Balta, flirting with such a puny, bald-headed bastard? It's a dream…that's right, it's a dream! —-Dream, dream…See you in my dreams, lalala~~.

Now, the trio of ulterior motive operators, Alan, Barry and Cohen, were in a mysterious daydream state.

"We would really appreciate your help, Seina-dono." Ryoko grabbed Seina's hand and looked at him with puppy dog eyes.

Ryoko had a winning strategy. Not to brag, but there wasn't a man alive who wouldn't be touched by something he'd heard like that.

In fact, the Three Idiots, freed from their daydreams, could be heard repeatedly shouting "With joy!" from the other side of the adjutant's wall.

However, Seina didn't seem upset at all.

"—I'm sorry…no…."

"…As expected of a man who was trusted by The Demon Princess…"

As for Seina himself, who was being overestimated in this way, although he appeared calm, he was actually in a state of complete confusion.

He didn't know what was going on.

Paralyzed, all Seina knew was that he could feel Ryoko's body heat through her gloves and that her perfume smelled nice.

"As expected of someone who has been trusted by Jurai's Demon Princess, Seto-sama. You're not going to be shaken by something like this."

"??"

But Seina still didn't quite understand what Ryoko was trying to say.

That's because, while Seina was highly adaptable when it came to bad luck, he has no immunity to the opposite.

Ryoko took another step closer and continued, "Well then, let me welcome you to the captain's position. Of course, as your subordinate, I will serve you to the best of my ability. You can give me any orders you want."

With moist eyes, she brought her face closer to Seina. She was willing to offer up the last materialistic means - status, honor, money, and herself, all of them.

"……"

But Seina didn't respond to that either.

Even Ryoko, as expected, showed a slight sense of confusion.

(…Even this is no good…?)

"Wooooooooooooooooooo!"

Behind the adjutant wall, the crew was louder than ever. Their excitement was at its peak, and each man's selfish delusions were expanding like a big bang in his inner universe. This was the reaction she wanted from Seina, but was that how the world was? Or was Ryoko also unknowingly caught up in Seina's misfortune?

"That sounds like a great opportunity, Seina! I think you should definitely take it!"

"But I'm worried about you being alone!"

"Well, we have no choice! We're your best friends, so why don't we just go with you?"

Like a comedy skit, Alan and the others forced their faces out from the wall of the adjutant.

"All I want is Seina-dono. You three should stay quiet."

Damn those guys were annoying.

Gasp!

For an instant, Alan and the others froze, as if they had become one with the adjutant wall, with resentful expressions on their faces, as if they were tormented by a nightmare.

From the walls, which looked as if they had been decorated with death masks, you could hear the voices of resentment ringing out as if from the depths of a cave: "Seina~, Seina~, Seina~, Seina~"

Their gazes, which could turn Seina to stone if he made eye contact with them, and the irritating trio of resentful comments, fortunately began to bring his confused thoughts back to reality.

(…Um, so the conclusion is something like this, right…?)

The woman in front of him was telling him to become a pirate.

“That……”

Realizing this, Seina looked at her with his eyes lowered.

“Yes?”

“…I’m sorry, I must decline.” Seina gently shook off her hand and declared firmly.

“Why? Don’t you like the terms?” Her moist eyes looked sadly at Seina.

“It’s not that!” Seina shook his head in a panic. It wasn’t like he had any conditions or anything like that, but there was no way he wouldn’t like her needing him.

“So why?”

“…Because I made a promise to a certain person.”

(—I’m looking forward to it.)

Seto’s words and smile were burned into Seina’s mind.

For the first time in his life, Seto had praised his misfortune, acknowledged him, made him feel needed, and allowed him to be in space. He couldn’t betray the person who had given him the most gratifying recognition of his life. No, he didn’t want to betray her.

“Well, Ryoko-san, and…”

“And what?”

“I don’t think pirates are a good thing”

It was a simple thing, but it was an honest, boyish statement.

Those who break the law and those who protect it… Though they were pirates, Ryoko and her associates position did not fit into such a simple diagram.

“We are…”

They were fighting for their existence and survival - Ryoko was about to say that, but stopped herself, knowing that this knowledge was not yet available to Seina.

—So it’s me who’s being tested…

Ryoko bowed her head and smiled faintly, her eyes sparkling with a mixture of sadness and happiness.

“I see… Then the next time we meet, we’ll be enemies.” Ryoko’s usual cool smile returned and she held out her hand to Seina.

“Yes.” Seina gently squeezed Ryoko’s hand back.

Her hand was firm as she shook it, showing her encouragement.

(… We’re enemies… But I don’t want to fight if possible…) He thought to himself afterwards, as he looked at the commemorative photo he had taken with Ryoko at the operators’ request.

By the way, his hands hurt from being shook hundreds of times by them as they pressured him to let them shake hands indirectly.

“Sorry, Seina, but we will be entering from the mooring dock.”

“Alright.”

“Now for the short jump.”

At Onnainin’s command, the GP ship quietly entered the hyperspace jump, which they had become quite accustomed to after being chased by pirates.

As Seina began his jump to the Academy, Ryoko was surprisingly anchored in nearby space.

“Captain, it’s coming soon…”

He stopped speaking when he noticed Ryoko smiling and gazing at the photo she took with Seina and the others.

“Are you on schedule to arrive?”

She replied, looking at the photo. “…Was that okay? I could have just kidnapped him. I don’t think he’d cooperate if I forced him here.”

“That power is a great threat to us. We should put him on Da Ruma’s blacklist and send a warning to all.”

“That’s true…” Ryoko looked at the photo and spoke as if it were someone else’s story.

“…Then, let’s do that.”

The adjutant waited for a moment for Ryoko’s reply, but took her silence as an acknowledgment.

“Please wait a moment. The game isn’t over yet.”

Ryoko stopped her adjutant as he headed toward the operator’s seat and gave him a confident smile.

“But our persuasion failed.”

“Can you truly trust someone who easily agrees to those conditions as a partner?”

“That……”

The lieutenant quietly shook his head.

“Well, I lost the first round. Jurai’s Demon Princess used me to her advantage.”

“What do you mean, used?”

“He’s still immature as a person. But he has great powers, and I don’t know how that will affect his development.”

“Indeed… it could even lead to our own destruction.”

“And an Earthling from an early civilization… haha. So when he turned me down, I was kind of happy, to be honest.”

“What?”

The adjutant was unsure of the true meaning of Ryoko’s smile, which was so innocent.

“The first step is passing. That makes it worth getting.”

Which one would he choose?

“I’m the one being tested… haha.”

The adjutant stared intently at Ryoko, who was smiling after making contact with Seto and Seina.

To him, Ryoko was like a daughter. After Ryoko’s parents died in an accident, he was entrusted with the young girl and has been educating her to follow in her parents’ footsteps… as a pirate captain.

(Ryoko-sama has become a better captain than I expected…)

However, the heavy responsibilities of being a captain had diluted her feminine feelings. Or perhaps, in his desire to give Ryoko a good education, the adjutant himself has unconsciously taken those feelings away from her.

He didn’t think he was wrong. But still…

The adjutant steeled himself. No matter how dangerous the words he was about to say were, he was hesitant to stop Ryoko, who had met Seina and looked somewhat amused. There was no parent who didn’t wish for their daughter’s happiness.

“Are you sure you don’t want to report him to ……Da Ruma……?”

“Yeah.”

Ryoko nodded quietly, but with a strong will.

At the same time, the adjutant also made up his mind.

“I understand. I will keep this a secret.”

“Thank you—”

“…… awesome.”

Having completed what was probably his final short-distance jump in the GP ship, Seina could see the majestic sight of a huge, ring-shaped station before his eyes.

No joke. It was huge.

The top, bottom, left and right edges of the station were not visible at the moment, but were just a white wall towering in space. Even the dots passing in front of the wall were cargo ships several dozen times larger than this ship - the size of three or four Shinjuku skyscrapers lined up vertically.

“The circumference of the ring we just saw is about 360 quadrillion kilometers. It’s so big that it could almost completely contain the solar system where Seina is from.”

“The solar system?!”

Even though that was said, the station was so huge that it was hard to imagine, but the station that he could see before him was more beautiful than anything he had ever seen before.

“This time, I really feel like I’ve come to space. So this is the Galaxy Academy.” Seina said, thinking about what was said about the front entrance.

“No, to be precise, this is not the Galaxy Academy, but a relay station on the periphery.”

“So what is the Galaxy Academy…?”

“Well, if you go to the Academy you’ll learn all the details from scratch, and since this would be a long explanation I won’t go into it here. To put it simply, this is the Academy’s customs office.”

Onnainin told him that all people entering the Academy were subjected to immigration control by inspectors here, where their identity, identification, purpose of entry, etc. are examined.

“… Something this huge is just a checkpoint…?” Seina, who was looking at the station from the window, blurted.

“Gravity waves detected! Something is jumping out again!” Alan suddenly screamed.

“Ergh, emergency evacuation!”

“No good, we won’t make it this time either!”

The next moment, a ship suddenly appeared right behind their ship, and despite their emergency evasion attempts, a massive vessel several dozen times larger than the theirs slammed into them.

—That was unpleasant…

The moment Seina made eye contact with the men on the bridge of the giant ship on the monitor, he was hit with a tremendous shock and lost consciousness.

(…Is this…a hospital?) That was the first thing Seina thought as he regained consciousness.

His consciousness was hazy, and his eyes were still unfocused, as if he was in a fog, but he was certain he was in a hospital. After all, hospitals were one of the top three places where Seina spent the most time, along with home and school. There was no way he could be mistaken.

The room was white and clean, with a faint smell of disinfectant in the air.

(…I did something again.) He muttered as his consciousness gradually cleared.

(So that was all a dream.)

It was truly a happy dream.

He had a happy dream where he somehow ended up in space and met Seto of Jurai, the first person to accept him. He was scared of being chased by pirates, but that was a bit funny. Even though it was a dream, the ending was not like him and it felt weird.

(…I see, that’s right. It was all a dream, hahaha…But it was a good dream.)

Maybe he was lucky just to have had a good dream?

Just as he was thinking that, sensation returned and told him that someone was holding his hand.

A soft, slightly cold hand. It wasn’t his mother’s; it was the hand of a thin, delicate young woman.

(…Oh, it’s Kiriko. Oh no, I’ve made her worry again…)

He squeezed her lightly to let her know that he had regained consciousness.

She must have noticed this, because Kiriko’s face was right in front of Seina’s eyes…

“Are you okay? Have you noticed?”

“What?”

—No, this person!

Short hair and blue eyes.

She had extraordinary beauty, like an overseas model…

“Amane…san?”

Yes. The person holding Seina’s hand was Amane Kaunaq.

“Thank goodness. You seem to be conscious.”

“…Um, then where is this…?!”

He quickly sat up and looked around the room.

The beds were different from those on Earth, and medical equipment with gauges similar to those on the GP ship. And outside the window spreads out…outer space.

“This isn’t a dream, I’m in space… I’m at the Galaxy Academy…”

“Yes, this is a medical room.”

As soon as she said that, for some reason Amane started giggling.

“That’s how I always meet you. You’re unconscious, and I take care of you…”

“Haha, that’s true… No way!”

Suddenly, Seina started looking around for something, and when he finally found it, he put his face close to the silver frame of the bed.

“…Thank goodness, what bad luck…”

He had a bitter memory of being misunderstood by Kiriko - he wanted to check for lipstick.

Amane, who had been watching Seina’s behavior in bewilderment, looked worried and put her hand to his forehead.

“Hey, are you okay? I heard you only had a mild concussion.”

“No, it’s not that… it’s the lipstick.”

“Lipstick?”

“Ah.”

He ended up saying something unnecessary.

He quickly covered his mouth and Amane gave him a teasing look.

“Hmm. I can give you artificial respiration now if you want.” Her tone was completely childish.

It was true that Amane was a grown woman and he was still a child… but Seina was upset by this.

—I don’t want to be treated like a child.

This felt even more true because Amane was about the same age as Kiriko.

“If I say ..... please, will you do it?”

Without thinking, such a challenging phrase came out of his mouth. It was half revenge out of frustration and half a bit of hope, but even Seina himself was a little surprised that he had said something so bold.

In an instant, Amane’s cheerful expression suddenly turned into that of a grown woman.

At the same time, a feeling similar to awe towards Amane - or rather, towards adult women - passed through Seina.

“I-I was just kidding, Amane! Um, well, thank you for taking care of me again!”

Blushing, Seina desperately tried to back out his words and change the subject, but Amane still smiled with confidence, as if it was no big deal to her.

“Oh, so you remembered my name.”

“Yes, of course.”

Amane smiled with particular joy in response to Seina’s reply.

—It would have been fine if she had lipstick on…

In a corner of his mind, that thought arose for a moment.

After further examination, Seina was released from the medical room. Other than the concussion, there was no other trauma and there were no abnormalities in the EEG.

Seina was guided by Amane and, headed to the block where Mitoto and Onnainin were waiting, completely unharmed.

It was the platform for the Linear Railcar. The car was about the size of a six-tatami room. It had the same atmosphere as a streetcar.

They boarded this and were transported to the immigration block.

“Oh, that’s right, Seina. Wait a minute.”

As Seina got into the vehicle with Mitoto and Onnainin, Amane, who was seeing them off, called out to him.

“What is it?”

The moment he casually put his face close to Amane, she whispered in his ear.

“!”

The feeling of soft lips on his cheek.

This is, well, that’s what we call…

As Seina froze, unable to think, he heard Amane’s voice whispering in his ear.

“Thank you for stopping the pirate ships.”

Seina was steaming and red, so Amane gently pushed both of his shoulders in to stop them getting caught in the closing door of the train.

A door separated Amane from Seina, who gave a quick wink.

Soon, the Linear carrying Seina and the others began moving silently.

“…”

Mitoto chuckled as she saw Seina still frozen in place.

“Hehe. Seina-chan, you’re all red.”

“No, not at all…”

With a look of embarrassment, happiness, and a mixture of other emotions on his face, he turned to Mitoto and Onnainin with a troubled look on his face.

Regardless of Mitoto, Onnainin looked on in shock.

“Seina, where did you meet Detective Amane?”

“Where?… When I received the GP pamphlet on Earth.”

The surprised expression on Onnainin’s face was somewhat similar to those of the crew when they first met Ryoko.

He felt a sense of admiration, or maybe a mixture of happiness, emotion, and surprise…

“…Is Amane actually quite famous…?”

“She’s the daughter of the owner of one of the most prestigious clothing brands in the galaxy, Kaunaq, and a top-ranked model of the highest order!”

“Top model…?”

“Yes. She retired from modeling and joined the GP a year ago. After that, as soon as her joining GP became known, the number of applicants increased by 20% compared to the same period last year, which was surprising!”

“Is that really so amazing?”

“It’s amazing, it’s a massive increase! Thanks to it, the number of new recruits increased dramatically, the number of troops increased, and I was even promoted to captain… But anyway, that’s beside the point. Her fan club, which is a barometer of popularity, is now so large that it doesn’t even come close to the Ryoko Balta fan club that Alan and the others were making such a fuss about!”

“Ah…”

“Yes!”

Seeing Seina’s reaction, which didn’t seem entirely clear, Onnainin slumped back in his chair.

“…Seto-sama, Ryoko Balta, and now… Seina-kun has really surprised me…”

Onnainin said but Seina still can’t believe it. Since coming to space, all the women he had met have been beautiful, so Seina’s sense of what it meant to be “beautiful” had become numb.

You could even call it an inflation of beauty. It was a total luxury item.

However, Amane was by far the most beautiful of the three. Someone that beautiful could easily give off a cold vibe, but when she smiled she had a friendly vibe that added to her charm.

And then Amane gave him a kiss on the cheek.

Remembering that, Seina’s face flushed again.

“Oh, by the way, Amane said something about stopping a pirate ship?” He asked hastily, trying to hide his embarrassment.

He had no time for that just now, but now that he thought about it, he had no recollection of it. It was probably unrelated to the incident with Seto.

“That’s right, I need to explain. Actually, just now… when you fainted, Seina, the ship that came close behind us was a pirate ship in disguise.”

“A pirate ship!?”

“Yes. We don’t know if it was an attempt to break into the Academy or some other kind of sabotage, but Detective Amane was investigating it.”

“So, it turns out that the ship had slipped through the net of that investigation.” Mitoto added some detail.

“However, the near miss with us uncovered it and ultimately prevented the break-in.”

Seina was stunned. Had he attracted pirates again?

“S-sorry. I’m causing trouble again…”

“No, no. In the end, we were able to expose the disguised ship, and all of our crew members are safe, aside from the ship. The only one who was hospitalized was Seina.”

As if he was used to it by now, he comforted him with a detached look on his face.

“… so what about the ship…?”

“Eh? Well, it’s a bit worn out now, but…”

Mitoto smiled cheerfully, ignoring Onnainin who seemed to be having difficulty speaking.

“I have to get Seina’s things, so let’s go take a look.”

“No, Mitoto-sama. I’ll send someone to get his luggage.”

Onnainin must be worried about Seina. From the looks of it, it seems that the GP ship had become quite damaged.

It would be an insult to the ship itself if he didn’t see it.

“Um, let me see. Please.”

“…I understand. But it’s definitely not your fault, Seina.”

Onnainin operated the panel inside the car and changed the linear train’s destination.

The GP ship arrived at the immigration station dock with considerable damage, especially to its exterior. The ship that Seto’s Jurai fleet had kindly repaired was in the same state as when it was attacked by the pirates… no, it was even worse.

Upon arrival, Seina looked up with a somber expression. Because of his own bad luck, the ship was in this condition. It would take a lot of work to repair it.

“This is …….”

“This is awful.”

As soon as he muttered this, a voice sounded as if speaking for Seina.

There was an old man there, dressed like the dock workers who worked there.

Judging from the mark on his hat, he appeared to be the person in charge.

“I’m so sorry! It’s my fault that it’s been so badly broken…”

Unable to bear it any longer, Seina quickly apologized. The old man slowly turned to face him.

“…Hmm? Are you Yamada Seina?”

“Yes… that’s right.”

“Oh, sorry. I didn’t think you’d be here. But don’t worry too much. I just want the crew to be safe.”

The old man looked at Seina uncomfortably, probably worried that his remark had caused unnecessary worry.

“I’ve heard of ……, I see. Well, of course I’ve heard about you. I am Kuramitsu Minami, the administrator of this facility. Nice to meet you.”

The old man, who identified himself as Minami, strongly shook Seina’s hand.

Still, Kuramitsu…… was a name he’d heard somewhere.

However, more than this memory clinging to Seina’s mind was the discomfort in his back that he had been feeling since a while ago that was bothering him.

Apparently, someone’s trembling hands were clutching Seina’s clothes.

As soon as he tried to confirm it.

“Seina, turn around!”

“Y-yes!”

Suddenly, Minami spoke in a practiced command voice, Seina reflexively pulled his right foot back, turned his back, and then turned back again. Because he had done this countless times at school events, his body moved reflexively and

smoothly.

“…I thought so. Mitoto!”

At the same time as he heard a voice behind him, Minami grabbed the strange thing clinging to Seina’s back - Mitoto - by the collar.

“Ahhh, father, I’m so sorry!”

While hanging, Mitoto thrashed her limbs like a kitten.

“Father…?”

Seina looked back and forth between Minami and Mitoto. At the same time, he remembered who the surname Kuramitsu belonged to.

(Okay, so this guy is ……)

He remembered the person on the other end of the line to whom Mitoto was desperately apologizing. This old man, Minami, was Mitoto’s father.

“How many times do I have to tell you to contact me as soon as you get back? And instead of coming to me right away, you stayed hidden.”

“I’m sorry, please forgive me, Father!”

Seina couldn't help but giggle at the sight of Mitoto, who had been unfazed by the incident, sobbing. He thought the same thing when she was apologizing at the guesthouse, but it was an amazing gap.

More than anything, she feared her father, even more than pirates.

“…That’s right, I’ll contact you too…”

He’d been busy again and forgot, but he still hadn’t been able to get in touch with Kiriko.

Considering the time, Kiriko should have returned to her home in Tokyo by now. This station would have at least made that phone call, of course.

The moment he thought that, he heard Onnainin’s voice from afar.

“Seina, it’s time to go!”

He suddenly came to his senses and looked around, and saw Onnainin calling out to him from the exit of the dock.

He’d caused him so much trouble, and it would be rude to make him wait any longer.

“S-sorry, I’m on my way!”

After waving vigorously to Onnainin, Seina bowed to Minami and Mitoto.

“Thank you very much for everything.”

“See you later, Seina-chan.”

“Thank you for taking care of my daughter. I’m sure we’ll meet again someday, so I hope you’ll take care of me then. And… good luck, rookie.”

“Yes. Excuse me!”

Happy with the encouragement, Seina ran off energetically with the two of them seeing him off.

At that moment, a large hole appeared in the deck beneath his feet. He didn’t know what caused it. It must have been a combination of bad luck and trouble caused by the usual combination of factors.

“……what?”

Naturally, Seina’s body was not designed to ignore gravity.

(Seina falling) x (hitting the control panel directly below) = catastrophe.

Swoosh, whirl, whirl. Glowing blue sparks circled the electrical systems inside the dock.

The next moment, the GP ship detached from the fixed arm probe, its exterior slammed into the side wall as it fell into the lower tank filled with nano machine-conditioned water.

—The huge amount water that overflowed due to the ship falling looked just like a tsunami hitting the dock.

An hour later, Seina and Onnainin were again in the Linear Rail car.

“Um… I’m really sorry.”

Seina bowed deeply. In the end, that was the final blow. He had destroyed Onnainin’s ship, driving it into ruin.

“Don’t worry about it… None of this is your fault, Seina.”

“Sorry.” Seina had been apologizing profusely for the past hour.

“It’s okay. Just like what happened earlier, it was a result of a small maintenance mistake compounding under the worst possible circumstances. If you think about it, you were just the one who created the situation.” Onnainin spoke calmly, with the expression of a philosophical monk.

“Yeah, but…”

“More importantly, Seina, look at that.” Onnainin pointed outside the railcar.

At almost the same time, the train exited the long tunnel, revealing beautiful scenery on every window.

“Wow…” Seina exclaimed as his field of vision suddenly expanded.

It was an open space so high that the bottom was invisible. The Linear Rail train was running between a complex intertwining multi-level garden and skyscrapers. The ceiling was blue with a glimpse of outer space in parts, but it was hard to believe that they were inside a space station.

“A space colony…” He muttered with an overwhelmed expression.

In the near future, huge artificial habitats - space colonies - could become reality on Earth.

But up until now, Seina hadn’t even thought about being inside one. He had only seen the exterior of the station, and had never seen anything like the “city on the ceiling” characteristic of space colonies.

In a normal space colony, gravity was generated by centrifugal force, so the city grew around the cylindrical colony, but the complete gravity control here broke away from this unnatural state and controlled all gravity in one direction. In other words, it was no different from being on a planet.

The Linear Rail train weaved between the buildings, heading for a tunnel that opened up in the distance.

“It feels like one big city.”

Looking at the sight unfolding around them, Seina sighed in admiration.

“Look, Seina. The outer ring we’re in now has different regions on the outside and inside. The outside is what you might call a united city-state under the jurisdiction of the Galactic Federation. The original Galaxy Academy is this inner part.”

Indeed, as he said, there was a wall between the side of the tunnel they had just come out of and the side of the tunnel they were heading towards, dividing the building in two. However, it was not an incongruous structure like the Berlin Wall that once separated East and West Germany; rather, it blended in beautifully as an accent within the urban design. If he hadn’t been told, he probably wouldn’t have realized it was a wall.

“There are facilities related to the Galactic Federation, and the outer city is the longest structure in the galaxy. It also serves as a logistics center and a market. There are no Academy immigration inspections, so many people come here for shopping and sightseeing.”

“Hmm…”

The words “longest in the galaxy” were hard to grasp, but he could get a sense of how amazing it was just from the scenery in front of him. The scale was completely different, but it was like going sightseeing on the Great Wall of China on Earth. Well, maybe not quite.

While he was thinking about this, Onnainin checked the monitor and said, “We will soon arrive at the Immigration Bureau. Once we have completed the procedures there, Seina will officially become a student at the GP Academy.”

Onnainin’s tone seemed to convey a mixture of relief at having to part ways with Seina, as well as a little bit of disappointment.

Seina once again thanked Onnainin. “Thank you so much for everything.”

“No, no. I’m the one who’s been able to experience a lot of things that I normally wouldn’t. I can brag about it to my friends.” He said with a smile.

That smile made Seina feel like a weight had been lifted from his shoulders. “…That’s right! Excuse me, I’d like to contact Earth for a moment.”

“Eh, Earth? We don’t have much time left… but please hurry. We’ll be there soon.”

At Onnainin’s instructions, Seina went to the phone in the next compartment.

He felt like this time he would finally be able to get in touch with Kiriko.

“Now, it’s finally your turn, Seina. The immigration inspector is waiting for you.”

“Y-Yes…”

Urged by Onnainin, Seina stood up.

It was like an airport lobby, but on a scale several dozen times larger… although, looking at the river and lush trees, it would probably be more appropriate to call it a park. Anyway, Seina was now in the waiting room of the immigration block.

A monitor floating in the air displayed Seina’s serial number. Although the procedure was finally complete, Seina’s heart was heavy. This time too, he was unable to get in touch with Kiriko.

—Yes, this is Masaki Kiriko. I’m out right now. If you need me…

The familiar voice on the answering machine lingered in Seina’s ears.

The timestamp told him that it was 1pm on a weekday in Japan time on Earth.

(…Being at home at this time is more of a problem…) As he walked with Onnainin, Seina thought.

The only thing holding back his dream of going into space was Kiriko. To Seina, his feelings for her are equal to his feelings for the universe.

However, this was rendered meaningless by the fact that “I can contact Kiriko on Earth at any time.” If he could hear her voice and see her face, then these two thoughts would

almost be compatible.

“Stay in space, join the Academy and become a member of the GP.”

However, his firm resolve had begun to subtly change. Not being able to contact Kiriko for such a long time had an effect on Seina’s resolve.

(What should I do…? I want to at least report it once…)

To be honest, it wasn’t just about Kiriko, it was the unconscious fear of never being able to go back, but there was no way that Seina would notice that right now.

Standing in front of the hundreds of inspection gates lined up in the supervision area, Seina was confused.

“Um, well…”

“That’s a lot, isn’t it? But this is just one of hundreds of immigration centers.”

Unaware of Seina’s confusion, Onnainin followed the voice instructions and headed to a certain gate.

Once you underwent the audit within this system and come out on the other side, it would become the Academy.

“Now, it’s your turn.”

“…”

Without making a final decision, Seina was dragged into the gate by Onnainin.

Without a sound, the door slid open to welcome them in.

“Auditor. This is Yamada Seina, a new student at GP Academy. Nice to meet you.” As he said this, Onnainin placed Seina’s documents on the transport plate.

“…”

It was that gesture and that strong, dignified voice that triggered it. There was no going back now. No, he couldn’t go back. The experiences he had had up until then flashed through his mind in an instant.

He remembered his promise with Seto and her smile.

—Let’s go.

(I’m sure Kiriko will be okay. I’m sure I’ll be able to get in touch with her.)

Seina looked determined and stepped forward with firm steps.

The documents placed on the transfer plate were transferred to the other side of a

transparent partition, to a woman who seemed to be the inspector in charge.

At that moment, he casually, really casually, looked at the woman's face.

"!?"

Seina suddenly stopped moving, as if he had been given an electric shock.

Long black hair.

Beautiful eyes and a gentle mouth.

Fingers tapping on the keys.

She looked alike. She looked alike!

Seina instinctively ran over to the partition and clung to it, staring at the inspector.

"…Kiriko-san…?"

No way, he thought.

There was no way Kiriko would be doing something like this in a place like this. She was an office lady in Tokyo. That's what she said. She told him about Shinjuku and Shibuya. Definitely not space. He'd never heard anything about a Galaxy Academy department store. The souvenirs were not Academy manju or space dango or any of those kinds of brands.

She's a stranger. A different person. A coincidence. Unrelated.

It was crazy that he'd only just made up his mind, and now he was having visions of Kiriko.

(I'm sorry, Kiriko. I'm going to the Academy now… please don't let anything dim my resolve…)

However, no matter how much he asked himself these questions, or how much he changed sutras (which was not a good omen), her expression, her aura, and even the shine of her hair, everything about her was just like Masaki Kiriko.

Was there anyone who could be so similar?

It was said that there are three people who look alike on Earth. If you expanded the story to the universe, there were probably more. It was still a small probability, but it was higher than the possibility that Kiriko was here.

A lookalike. It had to be.

But no matter what, Seina couldn't shake the feeling - or perhaps it was just a wish - that she was Kiriko.

Eventually, the auditor, who looked very similar to Kiriko, quietly began to speak.

“Seina-chan.”

—Wow, even the voices are the same!

He’d heard that if a person’s bone structure was similar, their voice would also be similar. Now that he thought about it, the voice of the recreated Oda Nobunaga sounded goofy, and other useless pieces of knowledge ran through Seina’s head.

As Seina was in a state of panic, the auditor called out to him again.

“…I’m glad you’re safe…. I was worried about you, Seina-chan…”

At that moment, Seina realized that the inspector was calling him “Seina-chan.”

I’m glad you’re safe, I was worried about you, Seina.

All of those words proved that the woman in front of him was undoubtedly her - Masaki Kiriko herself.

“K-Kiriko… right?”

“Yes.”

Kiriko, looking somewhat haggard, nodded.

“Why are you here…?!” With a puzzled look on his face, Seina asked the obvious question.

What about Tokyo? What about office ladies? Why space? Were you an exception, Kiriko? When did it start? For what reason? Was it a pamphlet?

However, Kiriko didn’t answer the question at all, but instead stood up from her operator’s seat and slowly walked over to the transparent door that separated her from Seina.

“K-Kiriko-san!”

Seina also moved to that door …… to follow her, but with his usual bad luck and momentum, he hit his head on it with a thump.

“Ow!”

“Seina-chan!”

Kiriko looked worried for a moment, but after confirming that Seina was not injured, she smiled with relief and gently placed her hand on top of Seina’s, who was clinging to the door.

“Oh my, Seina-chan is such a scatterbrain.”

“Haha, sorry.”

Even though it was through the door, he felt like he could feel Kiriko’s body heat, which

made him happy.

“Hey, Seina-chan.”

“Yes?”

“Seina, please. Go back to Earth.”

“Eh……?”

Seina couldn’t help but stare at her face. Her expression remained the same, full of kindness, but her eyes were very serious.

“Space, and the GP, is a lot more dangerous than you think. You were attacked by pirates, you should understand.”

This was the same thing that Seto and Kanemitsu said on board the Mikagami.

But Seina had already made up his mind. His decision has been made.

Yes, there were dangers, but Seina felt an irresistible attraction to space, which was why he told Seto that he wanted to stay in space.

Kiriko, his only regret, was here, for whatever reason. The brake turned into a gas pedal. He was now running at full throttle, and there was no reason to go back to being regretful.

“Let’s blow it to the ends of the universe, yeah okay!” His excitement was at its peak, and he was screaming in his head the things he imagined Kai would say.

“Kiriko-san, I…”

“Seina, you listened to everything I said, right?”

He smiled sadly. “Ugh…”

Seina’s heart was shaken. His unnecessarily high excitement suddenly cooled down, because Kiriko’s expression was the same one Seina would make if he had injured himself through recklessness or carelessness.

Seina got injured all year round, but it usually wasn’t his fault. But he was also at an age where he wanted to have fun, and sometimes he did dangerous things at the beach or with his friends. Whenever he got injured, Kiriko always made this face.

—Don’t do this again—

She would say it without anger or scolding.

“…Kiriko-san…”

An intense sense of guilt gnawed at him.

“Well, inspector. There are no problems with the documents, and I believe Kamiki Seto Jurai has contacted you regarding the issue of galactic law…” Onnainin said in a somewhat deadpan tone.

It was true that there were no problems with the paperwork, and Seto had contacted her through the GP. But Kiriko was an immigration inspector. No matter who agreed, if the inspector deemed Seina inappropriate, he wouldn’t be able to set foot inside the Academy.

“This is a personal matter, not an inspector’s! You should stay quiet!”

Yes, even if the refusal is for personal reasons.

“Y-Yes! Sorry…” Onnainin looked frightened by Kiriko’s strong tone and quickly hid behind the door.

“…But, but…” Onnainin began to speak as if to press on. He must have felt a little relieved now that he had some cover.

His sense of duty outweighed his fear of Kiriko.

However, Kiriko ruthlessly cut off even such minor resistance.

“I am his guardian. I will take over as guide from here on out. Please leave.”

Now that she had been officially said that as an inspector, any further interference would be overstepping his authority. Although he felt some reluctance, Onnainin, being loyal to his duties, had no choice but to comply.

“…Well then, Seina. If we have the chance, let’s meet again somewhere.”

“Um!……”

Not even a moment to say goodbye.

The unfortunate Onnainin, who had taken Seina out into space, smiled affectionately and waved his hand lightly, then left disappeared through the door.

After confirming this, Kiriko looked intently into Seina’s eyes.

“Seina-chan, in space, your bad luck can be life-threatening. Look at all that happened just to get here from Earth.” Kiriko said like a mother pleading with her beloved child.

He understood Kiriko’s feelings all too well. At the same time, he felt happy that someone cared for him so much and thought about him so much.

“Kiriko-san, I…”

Just as he was about to succumb to his feelings, a familiar voice boomed from the other side of the gate - from inside the Academy.

“Oh, here he comes!”

A woman with short hair and dressed in a GP uniform came down the aisle with a big smile on her face.

It was Amane Kaunaq, whom he had met in the medical room earlier. She must have come over while Seina was at the docks.

“Ah, Amane-san…!”

Remembering what had happened earlier, Seina held his hot cheeks.

“What are you waiting for? If the examination is over, hurry up and get over here, otherwise you’ll be a nuisance to the people behind you.”

“Amane, Detective Second Class! We’re still in the immigration process!” Kiriko yelled, her tone even harsher than when she spoke with Onnainin.

“What’s up with you, Kiriko? What happened to your usual unattractive efficiency? Ah, are you out of breath? Well, I guess it can’t be helped, this is something that can be done quickly…”

As soon as she said that, Amane operated the control panel with smooth finger movements.

“Audit complete. Entry permitted.”

An anachronistic synthesized voice rang out, and the transparent door separating Kiriko and Seina opened silently.

“Aaaaaaaaahhhhh!?” With her mouth wide open and a voice that sounded almost like a scream, Kiriko was in shock and before her eyes, Seina’s immigration procedures were successfully completed.

“Oh, you wrote that the introducer was Amane Kaunaq… Yay! Seina’s efforts have already earned me bonus points! Wow, my referral points have also been added with a bonus, totaling 200 points! With this, I’ve got a free invitation to the GP High-Class Officials’ Comfort Facility! The hot springs there have a good reputation. I’m invited as a pair, so shall we go together? Ahahaha!”

Amane overwhelmed Seina with her boldness and energy that belied her ever-present beauty.

However, this carefree attitude was tantamount to pouring gasoline on the flames of Kiriko’s anger.

“What the hell are you doing, you stupid woman!”

Kiriko was completely outraged, with not even a trace of her usual neat and tidy personality. Her yelling shook the entire immigration block. Even Seina had only seen it once or twice before.

“What the hell, stupid woman? Ah, what? Did you really want to press the button?”

“That’s not what I’m angry about!”

Amane’s misguided nonchalance threw a curveball at Kiriko’s momentum, frustrating her.

“Oh, I get it. Next person please.”

Amane announced into the mic.

Completely thrown off her pace and confused, Kiriko was faced with the next immigrant.

“I’m Tiro Elias, a new student at the Theatre Academy.”

“Um… Wait a minute Amane!”

“Now, you’ve got work to do.”

With that, Amane quickly took Seina’s arm and walked down the aisle.

“Wait a second…”

Even though she said this, Kiriko couldn’t chase Amane. She was paralyzed and struggling with a terrible conflict as she repeatedly looked back and forth between Tiro, who was waiting for his interview, and Amane and Seina.

“… Enough!”

Kiriko’s innate seriousness did not allow her to abandon her job.

“Oh, um, Amane. I still have to talk to Kiriko…”

“Thank you for earlier. Thanks to you, the incident was resolved safely. So as a token of my appreciation, I’ll show you around from here.”

After leaving the immigration gate, Amane walked down the busy block with Seina’s arm tightly interlocked.

Seina was confused, but not unhappy. To calm the grin that was threatening to form on his face, he scanned the surroundings.

“…Ah, what?”

What was this feeling? He could feel it everywhere he looked…no, he could even feel it from behind and to the sides…

(…It feels like I’m being watched…?)

It was just as Seina had felt: curious, piercing, scanning gazes. All sorts of looks of joy and sorrow were focused on him.

(Oh, come to think of it, Amane…)

He remembered what Onnainin taught him in the Linear. That Amane was a rich girl, a former top model, and an idol to be admired.

This was a very dangerous fact for Seina. He didn't know where Amane's fans were - in fact, judging from the way they were looking at them, there were probably quite a few around - and here he was walking arm-in-arm with the object of their admiration. This was tantamount to suicide, like being a lamb walking among hungry wolves. If he were to part ways with Amane and be left alone, he would definitely be killed instantly.

"Ah… Amane, please let go of my arm. I can walk by myself…"

"It's okay, it's okay."

Just because it was okay didn't mean it was okay for him! Even though he thought that in his heart, he couldn't be that forceful. The scene where he complained about the idol Amane was even crazier than the scene where he crossed arms with her.

Also, even if Seina tried to forcefully shake Amane's arm off, it was held tightly and wouldn't budge, even if he got serious.

The number of piercing stares from people, especially men who seemed to be Amane fans, increased. If this continued, he would turn into a hedgehog… That's what he thought.

"Wait!"

The savior has arrived! Kiriko, who had just finished her duties, followed him.

—Thank goodness…!

Seina felt relieved. As expected, it was always Kiriko who helped him. He was glad that this hadn't changed even in space… but…

—Huh? Before he knew it, the intensity of those piercing gazes had doubled…

The next moment, Seina realized that he wasn't actually saved at all. Judging from the men's angry voices, Kiriko also appeared to have a fan club.

(I see, if you think about it carefully…!)

Seina thought about the women he had met since arriving at the station.

A nurse he passed when he left the medical room.

A young woman at the Linear Rail station.

A female dock worker.

Young girls and elegant ladies passing through the immigration waiting room.

Although they were sophisticated, they didn't look all that different from the average Earth woman. From Seina's point of view, who had been in contact with Seto, Mitoto, Minaho, and Hakuren' girls, they were all, to put it rudely, "very ordinary looking."

In other words, Kiriko was a beautiful woman who stood out even in space. Compared to Amane, she was a little… but that was just a difference in taste, so it wasn't strange at all that she has fans and a fan club!

—Trouble!

However, despite Seina's confusion, Amane and Kiriko started arguing, which ended up bringing even more people into the group.

"Um, both of you, please calm down…"

Before long, a crowd had formed around them, and men who seemed to be fans of both Amane and Kiriko were watching the proceedings with a steady gaze. Naturally, their eyes were blazing with jealousy.

—No, wait, wait.

Seina was feeling anxious, but then he calmed down a little.

(I'm still 15, and I have a shaved head. From the looks of it, I could easily pass for Kiriko and Amane's 'sibling'. It's okay, I don't think they would think of me as a lover or anything like that…)

"Damn it, who is that guy?" One of the spectators muttered bitterly.

(Damn, that's no good!)

Seina's faint hope was only what could be seen objectively… but to the jealous men, it just looked like two beautiful women fighting over one man. The voices of Amane and Kiriko echoed above Seina's head, as he tried to stay as inconspicuous as possible between them.

"What a stupid thing to do, to send him home! He's a rising star in the GP!"

"That doesn't matter! If you hadn't dragged him in when you landed your ship this wouldn't have happened." Kiriko's voice was a little sharp.

Hearing that, it all made sense to Seina. The roar and shockwave he had heard while fetching water at Tenchi's house was the sound of Amane's spaceship landing. It didn't matter now, but if Amane had saved him, then she was also responsible for drowning him.

"Everyone makes mistakes. Besides, I didn't think he was a pure Earthling because he was at Tenchi-kun's house."

"Why has Amane always been like that?! You always see things only from your own perspective! And you're a GP…"

“Ah, I get it, I get it.” Deflecting Kiriko’s anger, Amane wrapped her arm around Seina’s again.

“Ah……” Feeling the softness of her breasts on his upper arm, Seina couldn’t help but cry out.

In an instant, Seina remembered a situation like this that had happened before: two women fighting over him… but it couldn’t have happened in real life, it was in a certain adventure game (age-restricted) that he’d enjoyed with Kai, without telling Kiriko.

(…At that time, I saved the game without realizing it, right when I was heading straight for the bad ending, and no matter what I did, I was stuck in a dead end where the girl would reject me…)

That was fine for games, but there was no save and load in real life!

While he was thinking about such trivial things, the number of people in the gallery increased. Moreover, when he looked closely, he noticed that the number of angry looks directed at him were increasing. The situation was getting worse and worse at an accelerating rate.

(…Why don’t Kiriko and Amane notice…?)

He didn’t know if he was being insensitive or if he was already used to it… well, it was probably the latter.

“Don’t worry, I’ll teach you everything from start to finish. See you, Inspector Masaki.”

“I won’t let that happen!”

Amane winked and prepared to take Seina away, but Kiriko stood in her way once again.

“Why? He’s already completed all the procedures.”

“It’s not a matter of procedure. If we don’t return him to Earth, his life will be at stake.”

“Why would Kiriko decide something like that?”

“Because I know Seina-chan better than anyone!”

Perhaps because of the heat of the moment, Amane noticed that she had instinctively changed the way she referred to Seina from “he” to “Seina-chan.”

A look of mockery appeared on her face - and the force of the audience’s anger grows.

“Oh really? Seina-chan, hey?”

“… I don’t really care. I’ve known him since he was a kid…” She looked a little embarrassed and looked away, then raised her voice to shake off her embarrassment. The audience’s anger was echoed below…“Anyway! I’ll take responsibility for getting him home.”

“…Do you want to go home?” Amane’s pleading gaze came so close that she could almost touch Seina.

“Ah, no…”

“He doesn’t want to go home♡” Amane turned to Kiriko with a look of joy and triumph.

“Don’t assume anything! You don’t know anything about him!”

“I know. He did a great job of rounding up those pirates, and earlier he prevented a disguised pirate ship from invading. Mmmm, just as I expected.”

Seina blushed as Amane rubbed his cheek.

Incidentally, the faces of the men in the gallery also turned red, of course, in anger.

“Yamada-kun will be sent back to Earth! The GP is too dangerous for him!”

—This situation was certainly dangerous.

“It seems like Kiriko is the one making the decision on her own. He doesn’t seem to want to go back.” Amane hugged Seina as if to protect him.

The gallery was already making a big fuss with people screaming and yelling, but their piercing gazes were like a hedgehog’s and there was no longer any part that pierced them.

(I don’t really care anymore… It’s too late to do anything now.)

Kiriko’s voice rang out in Seina’s fuzzy ears. “Get away from her already, Seina-chan!”

“Ah, it’s Seina-chan again.”

As Kiriko got angry, Amane smiled even more mischievously. She was totally enjoying this.

“Huh? What’s wrong?”

“It’s okay, I won’t steal him.”

“!!! That’s not what I meant!”

“So what do you mean?”

“Don’t change the subject!”

“Kiriko is the one changing the subject!”

Perhaps it was becoming tiresome, as Amane’s voice gradually became more and more harsh.

Just as Amane and Kiriko were about to enter hedgehog mode.

"…You two, stop messing around."

Suddenly a voice rang out and an video was displayed on a screen installed in the block.

At the same time, Kiriko, Amane, and the audience all saluted towards the screen.

The person reflected in the picture was a lively old lady with brown skin and blonde hair combed back, who looked like the 'Commander in Chief of some place'. Judging from the attitude of Kiriko and the others, there was no doubt that she was a very important person.

"All bystanders, return to your posts! Inspector Masaki Kiriko. Detective Amane Kaunaq. And, Yamada Seina. Chairman Airi is calling for you. Please report to the Chairman's office immediately."

"Haaa!"

The two of them saluted again at the command.

Seina awkwardly followed suit, and the curious onlookers scattered in all directions like a swarm of baby spiders.

—The president's office was more like a greenhouse floating in space.

It was about twice the size of the gymnasium at Seina's school, and the hollow space was made up of a huge, obsidian-like rock, probably a single block, that served as the floor.

This room was certainly impressive. It was impressive, but it didn't have the same sense of wonder as Mikagami, with its dizzying inflation of scale and bizarre buildings made entirely of wood. However, Seina was fascinated by the blue, earth-like planet that was visible from the large window.

(Beautiful, right? ……)

This was the first time he had seen a planet up close like this. When he woke up on the GP ship, he had already traveled far away from the solar system, and after that he hadn't been near a planet due to repeated jumps.

"Do you like the view here?"

As Seina gazed blankly at the planet, he heard a voice coming from somewhere.

"Eh…? Yes, yes!"

"Nice to meet you, Yamada Seina. I'm Kuramitsu Mikami, the Principal of GP Academy."

Seina instinctively straightened up, and the woman from the previous video appeared, standing next to a large desk and introducing herself.

"Kuramitsu? Ah, nice to meet you too…"

She was also a Kuramitsu. According to what Kiriko told him on the way here, she was Minami's older sister and Mitoto's aunt.

Mikami then introduced the woman sitting next to her.

"And this is the Galaxy Academy's Chief Executive Officer, Chairman Masaki Airi."

"Nice to meet you, Seina-kun"

The woman in her late twenties, introduced as Airi, smiled brightly at Seina.

"H-hello…?"

For some reason, Seina felt something nostalgic about that smile.

(Anyway, she's young for a CEO… but wait a second?)

He thought the same thing when he met Seto, who was Aeka and Sasami's grandmother.

(Maybe this person is also quite old?)

Such a question arose, but it was not something to discuss here.

— Now then, Airi changed the atmosphere and began to speak.

"First, let's hear Masaki Kiriko's opinion."

"I don't think I need to explain to the Chairman that contact with early stages of intelligent life is prohibited by galactic law. As you know, he is a pure Earthling. As an Inspector, I cannot tolerate any violation of galactic law."

Kiriko spoke in a deliberate businesslike manner. If she spoke as Masaki Kiriko, as a substitute guardian for Seina, she would be afraid that her emotions would be exploited.

"But, a special application has been sent to GP…" Airi flashed a document, which, of course, Seto has sent.

"Well, okay. Let's put that aside for now. Next, Amane Kaunaq."

"Yes." Amane took a step forward with a smug look on her face, a stark contrast to Kiriko's.

"Due to your carelessness and misunderstanding of the facts, you invited him, a pure Earthling, to join the GP… what was your intention in inviting him?"

"Even if you say it was my intention…" Amane tilted her head in thought. "I had a feeling that I'd meet him again."

"How irresponsible!"

Kiriko unconsciously raised her voice, but Mikami stopped her with a look.

"……Sorry"

Even though she had decided not to get emotional, she was angry at Amane's actions and attitude.

"Plus, he was there."

"I see. But that's Earth."

"But more than that, I felt he had some kind of talent. I felt it would be a waste to let it go to waste."

Airi and Mikami exchanged a quick glance.

Airi and the others were well aware that Amane had extremely sharp intuition. She still held the record of having zero pirate encounters among the ships she served on, and her attack accuracy was 88% without a fire control computer. This figure, based purely on instinct, was truly astonishing.

As a result, Amane's intuition had once again identified the talent of "Seina's misfortune." From the GP's point of view, this was an achievement worthy of a special award.

"I see. I get it…"

"Chairman Airi." At that moment, Kiriko raised her hand with a serious expression.

Inwardly, she regretted her actions on Earth.

(Why didn't I listen to what Seina had to say? When he came to visit me at home, he had already encountered Amane. If I hadn't made such assumptions and had listened to what he had to say, there were plenty of ways to prevent this from happening… To make amends, I can't back down now.)

Kiriko continued to face Airi with grim determination. "…Please. If you think it is in his best interest, please leave it to me. I will deal with the matter however I see fit later."

"I understand how you feel, but the special application form has been personally signed by Kamiki Seto Jurai, who has also said, 'Please be careful.' There are no problems with the application documents, and his parents have already agreed." Mikami instinctively covered her mouth as she remembered the video letter from Seina's family.

It seemed like that really hit home for her, as she looked down and tried hard to hold back her laughter.

"…In that case, it's up to his will. We shouldn't interfere any further… right?" After saying that, Airi looked at Seina.

"Yamada Seina, now we will ask you for your final decision. Please think carefully before answering."

Seina responded silently to Airi's serious gaze.

"What do you want to do?"

Kiriko gazed at Seina's profile with prayerful eyes.

Those eyes hurt.

Seto praised him.

Ryoko agreed.

Amane welcomed him.

However…Kiriko didn't praise him. This fact made Seina feel inexplicably irritated.

He didn't want to dismiss anyone's feelings.

He didn't want to betray anyone's feelings.

But that didn't matter - he didn't want to lie to his feelings.

There was silence for a few seconds.

He wanted Kiriko to acknowledge him. He don't want her to protect him.

So…

That's why he wanted to be in space. A place where he could believe in possibilities.

Seina looked up with determination in his eyes and spoke.

That was the moment when Yamada Seina's admission to GP Academy was officially accepted.

"…Well then," said Airi, "I'll show you around the Academy." As she gleefully took Seina's arm and left the room.

Mikami looked at Kiriko and Amane, who were left behind.

"Amane Kaunaq. Although this matter has been resolved, it is also true that you were negligent. Therefore, we have decided to withhold your requested promotion to Detective First Class."

"Mikami-sensei?! You can't do that!"

"Yes, I can." Mikami said bluntly.

There was a huge difference in treatment and investigative authority between first-class and

second-class detectives.

Given Amane's track record, it would not be surprising if she were to be certified as a first-class detective, but unfortunately, her overly bold personality had led to her make minor mistakes, which resulted in her being turned down several times in her requests for certification.

Well, one theory was that if they promoted her to first class detective capable of acting independently, and something were to happen to her, the number of people wanting to join the GP would decrease - but that was a very realistic and plausible rumor, anyway…

"You would normally be required to undergo retraining, but instead you will be reassigned. Please take up your new position as a lecturer at the GP Academy and reflect on your actions. The period is indefinite. Your return to the workplace will be determined based on your attitude and performance as a lecturer."

"Wait, wait a minute, indefinitely…?!"

"Nice to meet you, Amane Sensei."

Mikami's words were calm but forceful, leaving Amane no choice but to back down.

However, even if her body was willing to back down, her mind could not.

(Why why why

he'd gotten so used to thanks to Kiriko and Amane… He also discovered that Airi had a decent fan club of hobbyists, though not as big as Amane's.

—However.

The problem was that most of the people passing by were looking his way and smiling wryly, while muttering extremely ominous things like, "It's been a long time since we've seen a sacrifice."

The reaction was clearly different from when Kiriko and Amane were there. It was as if they were feeling sympathy for his bad luck.

(Um, wait a minute…?)

If he was unlucky and attracting attention, it was business as usual.

Oh yeah. No problem then! Forget it. There were bigger problems to worry about.

Yes, what he really needed to worry about is…

(…It's definitely those eyes…)

Even though he had followed his own path and was now in the universe he had always dreamed of, there was still something unsettling in his heart. Of course, Seina knew what that was.

It was because of the saddest look he had ever seen in Kiriko's eyes.

Although he had often caused worry when he was injured, this was the first time he had made her genuinely sad.

—But… I can't say I'm going home.

There's no way he could say that!

But he wanted her to understand… He wanted her to congratulate him.

(Should I turn back now and explain things properly?)

That's what he was thinking about.

"…If that's what you're thinking, leave her alone for a while." Airi said as if she could read his mind.

"Eh?…But…"

"There's no point in trying to explain it to her now. She knows it too. She just needs time to accept it."

"…"

“You know, the old saying goes, ‘If pushing doesn’t work, try pulling.’ You won’t be popular if you’re just forceful.”

“!”

It hit him right in the feels. Seina’s feelings had been completely seen through and he could only blush.

But, thinking about it, he agreed with what Chairman Airi said. He was fortunate to be in the same place as Kiriko, so he had more time and opportunities than he did on Earth. Seina decided and smiled at Airi.

“Got it”

“Okay. But… you shouldn’t be thinking about other women while you’re doing this.”

She clenched her crossed arms tightly.

“Ouch!”

Was she serious or joking?…Well, it was probably a joke, of course, but there was something very dangerous in this woman’s eyes, as if she could take a joke seriously.

“I understand, Chairman Airi.”

“When it’s just the two of us, you can call me Airi. Chairman seems a bit old, doesn’t it?”

—Wow… this woman is saying some scary things!

He didn’t mind calling her Airi-san. Like Seto, she was young and beautiful, far from her title, and calling her Chairman sounded scary in a different way. As he was wondering what to do, he looked into Airi’s eyes.

“!”

Why? An image of Seto came to his mind. A chill ran through him, like the edge of the abyss Seto had shown him when she’d forced him to make a decision.

However, it would be some time before Seina realized the true nature of the chill that his instincts had caused.

“B-but, I can’t just call you by your first name.”

“Hmm, you’re right. It’s not good to do it all at once. I think it’s best to take your time with these things.”

…What did that mean? He must have missed something important.

As if ignoring Seina’s questioning look, Airi continued.

“Then, please call me Airi-san. Okay♡”

“…Y-Yes, Airi-sa…”

Just as Seina was about to speak, a voice rang out from behind him.

“Chairman~!”

“What the hell are you talking about? Who the hell are you, interrupting our time together?”

At that moment, Airi looked over at the source of the voice, furious.

“…… Ah.”

Seina couldn’t help but exclaim in surprise.

“Well, now it’s your turn.”

Mikami looked at Kiriko, who looked down slightly.

Now that they are alone in the president’s office, the atmosphere felt heavy, as if Kiriko was dominating it.

“Oh dear, if you make a face like that, Seto will play with you.”

“…Huh!?”

She looked up in surprise.

“Chasing after Seina and getting caught up by Seto-sama… hohoho”

“Oh, that’s… Seto-sama, right?!”

Kiriko instantly tugged at her memory.

—-That time… on the night that Seina encountered Seto and entered Mikagami, Kiriko, who had hurriedly pursued Seina from Earth, caught up with the Seventh Sentinel Fleet.

“Minaho-sama!”

Kiriko seemed in a panic as she rushed over to the GP ship repair site.

Minaho, who was in charge of the repairs, greeted her with a smile.

For Kiriko, Minaho from the main Masaki family was a long-time acquaintance.

“Oh Kiriko-chan. That was quick.”

“Where is Seina?”

“Mikagami’s guesthouse… wait a minute!”

Minaho grabbed Kiriko’s arm as she tried to run away in a panic.

“Hey, it’s getting late. He must be very tired after meeting Seto-sama, so let him have some time to relax.”

“Ugh…”

It couldn’t be helped if she heard that he was tired after meeting Seto. Kiriko understood the reason all too well and could only retreat in silence.

“How about we talk about it tomorrow morning? It’ll take some time to repair this ship anyway.”

Saying this, Minaho looked towards the dilapidated GP ship.

“That’s terrible……” Kiriko, who was drawn in by the sight of the ship, exclaimed in distress.

“…If you include the pirate ships that were lost due to fights among themselves, the total number is 489. It can’t be helped, being chased by so many pirates.”

“That many!?” Kiriko’s face turned pale.

—I’m surprised he survived.

She had been watching him since he was little and she knew that Seina’s ability to avoid danger was genuine.

Although he often got caught up in misfortune due to his bad luck, he never suffered near-fatal injuries. Another of his abilities was that he was lucky to get more than the best of injuries under the circumstances.

However, if that ‘good fortune’ was compounded by bad fortune, even the best case scenario could be life-threatening. The situation before Kiriko’s eyes was the embodiment of such a nightmare.

It was just a small coincidence that Seina was alive.

“Minaho-sama. I’ll take him home while he’s asleep.”

“…Seina looked so happy to be in space.”

“!”

Minaho’s quiet words caused Kiriko to stiffen in shock.

—Yes. Seina loved looking at the stars since he was a child.

What made an impression on her was when, while looking at the moon, he muttered, “I’d like to go there.”

It was rare for Seina to talk about his hopes. Because of his misfortune, he had little idea of what he wanted to do or what the future would bring. So that one word felt like a treasure to him and to Kiriko.

—But, but.

As an older sister and a guardian, there was no way she could approve of it.

“…It’s okay. Even if Seina-chan hates me, I’ll just…”

“Well, we still have time. Why don’t we try to persuade him tomorrow morning? If we forcefully wipe his memory, there’s no telling what might happen given his bad luck.”

“Th-that’s…”

Kiriko stammered. She could bring him back while he was asleep and wipe his memory without him realizing it. But Minaho was right, and given Seina’s misfortune, that was risky.

“I think it would be better to convince him and get him to agree before the deletion process would go smoothly.”

“……I agree……”

“So Kiriko, please help us process the data on the captured pirates. It’s a big problem, with so many of them.”

She couldn’t refuse when she was asked with folded hands. Besides, it was going to be a while before Seina woke up anyway.

Thus, while Kiriko was working all night, she suddenly fell asleep, and when she woke up, Seina and the GP ship had already set sail.

Even after that, Kiriko just couldn’t catch up with Seina.

As a last resort, she was going to catch him at the Academy outer ring, but then that near miss happened. She rushed to the medical room, only to find that he was hospitalized in a completely different place than she had been told. When she finally reached the room where Seina was, he had just been discharged from the hospital… and so on. In the end, she ended up catching him at the immigration bureau, where she was supposed to work. This was also the result of a rather aggressive manipulation of the numbering system.

So, this whole misunderstanding was down to Seina’s bad luck and Seto’s handiwork.

In front of Mikami, Kiriko bit her lip hard.

“Why does everyone think of Seina-chan…”

Kiriko clenched her fist in frustration. She couldn’t accept it. Why did they gang up on her and put Seina in danger? Kiriko was so angry that tears were about to spill.

Mikami gently said to Kiriko. “Kiriko-san, I know that you have always loved Seina like a little brother, but he won’t be a child forever.”

“!”

Those words were the truth Kiriko was trying to avoid.

—I feel so sorry for him. I feel so sorry for him. —

Her own voice echoed in her head. Determined to protect the baby, she created a small cradle world. Before she knew it, this world had become everything in Kiriko’s heart.

—I will protect this child—

For Kiriko, the baby had to be something she could hold in her arms. No matter how big it grew, it had to remain that way. It must not leave the cradle that she had created.

—This child is mine! This child needs a cradle! —

But that was not the case. It was not the baby who really needs the cradle.

…It was Kiriko.

“……!”

Kiriko shook her head to clear away the thoughts that welled up in her heart. She didn’t have the capacity to acknowledge them at the moment. And what would come next…

“Mikami-sensei, I…”

“You have also been transferred. You will be a teacher at the same GP Academy as Amane.”

“Wha……?”

“Well, you can help him grow for a while. This is a good choice for that purpose, right?”

“M-Mikami sensei?!”

“I won’t accept any complaints. And a message from Seto: ‘Make sure you work him hard and make him into a man.’ Hahaha, that’s a pretty meaningful phrase.”

“Make him a…”

Kiriko’s face was red all the way up to her ears and she bowed her head. And then she realized she had fallen right into Seto’s trap.

The “owner of the voice” that appeared before Seina and Airi was a Wau woman.

The Wau people were H-type humans, a race with a slightly different appearance from Earth-type humanoids, and were characterized by facial features that were somewhat like a cat or a lion.

Seina’s surprise was at her appearance.

By coincidence, he had never encountered any other form of alien until he came here.

“Let me introduce you, Elma. This is Yamada Seina, a new student at GP Academy.”

“Yamada… Ah, that one.”

The Wau woman, Elma, looked at Seina with interest. Judging from her reaction, it seemed that Seina was quite well known within the Academy.

“I see, you are from Earth. No wonder you are surprised to see me.”

“…I’m sorry.”

Seina bowed to Elma. Even though it was his first time, Seina knew it was rude to be surprised at a woman’s face.

“Thank you for apologizing.”

With that, Elma gave Seina an affectionate nuzzle. The behavior was somewhat cat-like, and although ticklish, it wasn’t unpleasant.

“……?”

Then, something struck Seina’s memory.

He had the feeling that this wasn’t the first time he’d met Elma.

“Um… did I happen to meet you somewhere before…?”

“What?”

“Oh, I’m sorry, that can’t be true. It’s my first time meeting a Wau person…”

Elma looked puzzled, but then smiled and said, “Hehe. If you want to ask me out on a date, I’m always open to it.”

“Wha…what?”

Indeed, if you thought about it, it sounded like a poor pick-up artist’s move.

Ignoring Seina’s panic, Elma exchanged a few words with Airi and waved at as she walked away down the hallway.

“… You’re doing pretty well, Seina,” Airi said with a sulky look on her face.

“N-no, that’s not it, I really feel like I’ve met her somewhere before…”

“I wanted to show you around the Academy, but I guess you prefer a younger girl like Elma. I’m just not worth it.” Airi pretended to be sulky and spoke loudly, turning her face away but not forgetting to occasionally cast menacing sidelong glances at Seina.

In this situation, there was only one thing Seina could say.

“N-No, that’s not true. I want Airi-san to show me around…”

“You don’t have to push yourself. You can ask Elma for help.”

He’s definitely didn’t think that was a good idea.

“I’m not forcing myself.”

“…… Really?” Airi looked at Seina sadly…and it was frighteningly cute.

“Y-Yes.”

He nodded earnestly with a straight face. Sincerity - this was the only option for a boy who couldn’t skillfully deliver lines that would tickle a woman’s heart.

“Well then, stay with me until the end.”

“Of course.” Airi smiled heartily.

“I’m so happy. If I show you around the Academy properly, it would take three or four years just to have a quick look, and about two hundred years if I really took the time to show you

everything, so no one has come along with me until now."

"Huh!?" Did he hear something wrong? He casually blurted out something terrifying.

"There was a stupid TV show before that had a grand plan to explore all the facilities of the Academy. It's been 300 years since it started and it's still on the air. Even if they could visit all the facilities, new ones are born almost every day, and even the places they've already visited are constantly being rebuilt. It'll probably never be possible to air the complete program, ha ha ha!"

"Wait a second. I don't mind going around here and there, but I have a lot of Academy classes and stuff…" Seina said modestly so as not to upset Airi.

If he spent his entire life just touring the Academy, he had no idea what he what the point of coming here was.

It's fine!"

"What?"

"As the Chairman of the Academy, I say it's okay, so I don't care about classes!" She spoke as if it were a matter of course, even though it seemed to deny her own existence.

"Airi-san… I came here to become a GP member."

"Tch, what a picky guy. Well, then, let's go on the special "one month endurance course of the hidden spots"! It might be a little tough physically, but we'll be able to see all the famous spots, and it'll be fun because we'll go through bottomless swamps full of mysterious poisonous creatures to take a shortcut!"

"Ah, Airi-san, that's a bit much…"

"…What?… That's mean, Seina-kun. You said you'd take care of me for the rest of your life."

"I didn't say that."

"It will take hundreds of years to complete the whole cycle, so to the end means we will be together forever! It's terrible to lie, Seina-kun!"

He felt like he'd fallen for a nasty scam. What was worse was that even though she was an adult woman, her sulking behavior seemed cute to him.

"I, I understand…"

Alas, it was all over. Unable to resist the extraordinary gravitational force, the Seina spaceship was about to be swallowed by the Airi black hole. However, although Airi looked young and beautiful, she had the mental age of an old woman… and in her case, she had a strong old man-like personality. This fact created a small crack in the black hole.

—The words "Lifetime" and "Together"—

Whether it was coincidence or instinct… the helpless “dad joke” that had been contained in the words she had spoken earlier flashed through Airi’s mind.

“Pfft… Kukukuku… Together forever, kufufu…”

There was no point in laughing since he was so caught up in what he said himself. Thanks to this, Seina was able to escape Airi’s gravitational pull and regain his sense of self.

Airi’s strategy, which seemed perfect, was defeated by her own mistake.

“… Phew.”

Seina breathed a sigh of relief and tried to quickly leave, but Airi grabbed his shoulder with incredible strength.

“If that’s the case, I’ll take you by force! It’s the only option I have!”

— He didn't know what was going on anymore. What do she mean ‘it's the only option’?

Although he didn’t understand what was going on, Airi’s expression was full of tragedy, and he had a vision that once he was taken away, he’d be stuck with it forever, and a title caption like an unpleasant daytime soap opera appears on the screen, saying “Love’s Escape, Journey to Death,” with the northern sea in the background.

“Please, okay? We can’t go back, Seina…”

Just when he was about to be entangled in the spider’s web - or rather, its intention.

“Chairman Airi, I would like you to sign the special exception document for Yamada Seina.”

Before he knew it, they had arrived at the office, and one of the staff members who had surrounded Airi and Seina and watching their skit called out to her.

“Okay, I’ll be right there.” As if switching channels, Airi instantly switched to a show called ‘Welcome, Strict Chairman’.

The staff member who called out to Seina gave him a meaningful look. Principal Mikami had predicted what would happen if she had left it to Airi, and had told her to stop it at an appropriate point.

“Well, I’ll go and get the formalities done! We’ll continue later.”

“To be continued…”

Leaving a stunned Seina behind, Airi ran off, humming a tune.

“She’s a caring person.” A staff member said to Seina.

“I don’t think it was at that level…”

“I bet you liked it.”

The other staff members, who had been keeping their distance, also gathered around Seina.

They were made up of a variety of different races. They were H-types, similar to Earthlings. They were Wau-types, like Elma. Then there were people who looked like machines, or maybe they were actually machines, and people who were completely green.

The H-type people, whose expressions were easily recognizable, were smiling as if to comfort Seina, who had been hit directly by Typhoon Airi. It was likely that the other races were doing the same. Seina was naturally relatively sensitive to people's kindness, and this incident caused him to feel a sense of closeness to the other people - in other words, he accepted them into his consciousness as intelligent lifeforms.

"Um… what Director Airi said earlier… of course it was a joke, right?" He asked the staff around him about Airi.

"It's okay. I'll stop when you reach your limit."

"Is that so… but where does it end?"

"Well, well, in your case, you seem pretty easy to tease, so she'll go all the way to the end…!"

At that moment, the employee who was about to answer the question… no, everyone surrounding Seina suddenly distanced themselves from him again.

"?……um……"

"You're Yamada Seina, right?" Suddenly, a figure appeared in front of Seina.

"?… Yes, that's right…"

The person in front of him had pink hair and was wearing flashy clothes. He was clearly different from the people around him; in Earth terms, he was a young man with a visual kei look. **(TN Note: Visual Kei is a category of Japanese musicians that have a strong focus on extravagant stage costumes.)**

But more than that, the word "arrogant" described him very well.

The man took a deep breath and spoke in a voice from the bottom of his stomach.

"I hate Earthlings!"

"…Huh!?"

"It seems that you have accomplished great things even before enrolling in the GP Academy… but I am not so easygoing! A mere Earthling from the remotest part of the galaxy could never become a glorious member of the GP!" He screamed, pointing at Seina.

— I don't understand. Who on earth is this person?

“Um, who is this…?” Seina asked timidly.

However, the man seemed to be the type who didn’t listen to others, and continued talking nonstop as if he was drunk with himself.

“Listen, Earthling! The GP is a splendid, sophisticated, high-class organization! After all, I’m here! I don’t know what you’re mistaken about, but you backwards Earthlings should just run back to Earth, the headquarters of the frontier… nga!”

Bonk!

The man stopped moving.

The corner of the thick file that Airi had swung down had embedded itself into the back of his head.

“Don’t intimidate the freshmen, you idiot!”

“Oh my, Airi-sama. You’re as beautiful as ever.”

The man bowed respectfully with a huge bump on the back of his head. Whether he was patient or insensitive, his appearance was undoubtedly graceful, but there was something slightly foolish about it.

“What, Earthling? Say that again.”

“Hmm, did I say something? Haha, well, excuse me then!”

With that, the man unfolded a fan, held it to his mouth, and turned to Seina.

“Well then, Seina. I’m looking forward to tomorrow’s lessons. Hahaha, hahaha, hahahahahahaha!”

The sight of the man walking away laughing like an idiot was simply foolish.

“Who is that… weird guy?”

That was the only way to describe him.

“He’s a teacher at the GP Academy”

“Teacher…?”

Seina was shocked. No wonder he was saying something about classes.

“His name is Tennan Seiryo. He was even a potential fiancée to the princess of the Jurai royal family, so his abilities are unquestionable. Well, he used to be a bit strange, but…” Airi chuckled.

“They say there’s a fine line between insanity and genius, right? It was fine as long as he maintained that delicate balance. But after he lost his duel with Tenchi-chan and declared

that he hated Earthlings, he turned into a comedian who specialized in nonsense."

Seina was shocked. She has definitely said "Tenchi".

"He's become a pretty interesting character, so I like him quite a bit. But he's not that harmful, so don't worry. I know he'll get on your nerves from time to time, but you can just ignore him by making jokes or pointing them out."

"Um, more importantly, when you say Tenchi-chan, you're talking about Masaki Tenchi-senpai, right…?"

It was Tenchi, not some idiot that he didn't want to get too involved with.

Come to think of it, Airi also called herself "Masaki Airi."

"…What on earth is going on?"

"I think you asked Seto-sama a little bit about it… so let me explain in a bit more detail."

Airi cleared her throat and launched into an epic tale that would involve Jurai and the Academy, as well as Tenchi and Kiriko.

"Jurai… you know that, right? The planet where Seto and her people live. The nation with the strongest military power in the galaxy."

"I've heard that."

"Right. So, there are four families in the Jurai royal family, known as the Four Great Royal Families. There is Seto-sama's Kamiki family, the Amaki family, the Tatsuki family, and us, the Masaki family."

"Masaki…"

Such stories may have seemed unbelievable if you suddenly heard them, but they made sense when compared to the experiences you have had up to now.

"Seina, have you ever met Tenchi's grandfather?"

"Yes, I know him very well."

When he was a child, the shrine was his playground. He was often scolded and would often fall down the stairs, so he had to be taken care of. He was also given fruit from the fields to eat, and he and Kai and Tenchi played together, playing with bamboo-copters and other toys.

"He is the son of the current Emperor of Jurai, Azusa-sama. His real name is Masaki Yosho Jurai. He now goes by his Earth name, Masaki Katsuhito."

"That old man…?"

If he thought about it, it didn't seem so strange, being a member of the Jurai royal family.

And Tenchi inherited that royal blood.

This meant that Tenchi was a direct descendant of the Emperor of Jurai.

However, Seina could not connect the image of Tenchi with that of Seto and the other Juraians. This may be because Tenchi was too familiar to him.

“So then, Kiriko-san and the others…?”

“They are also descendants of Yosho-sama, though they are from a branch family. Not only Kiriko and Kai, but everyone who lives in that village, more or less, has Yosho-sama’s blood in them.”

(I see. That’s why the words “Seina is a pure Earthling” came up several times in Kiriko’s conversation. Kai’s village is now very ordinary, but I heard that it was a closed village before the war. If everyone has the surname Masaki and is a descendant of aliens, that makes sense.)

“It’s amazing… to think that there were aliens so close.”

The faces of the people in Kai’s village flashed through his mind. They were all aliens… For some reason, Seina felt strangely excited.

“Kai is a pretty careless guy, but he doesn’t show any sign of it.” Seina said as if he had just remembered. They saw each other almost every day, and he knew almost everything about Kai, but he had never sensed anything like that. For someone who was quite loose-lipped, it was quite a foolish display.

“No. The children in that village aren’t told this truth until they reach adulthood. They’re raised as normal Earthlings.”

“So Kai doesn’t know that he’s the descendant of aliens?”

“I don’t know. You see… the whole village there has a lot of fun telling the truth to the children. I think anyone would be surprised if they were suddenly taken into space or their parents just came down from a spaceship.”

That was true. He still couldn’t forget the amazement he felt when he found out he was in space.

“So, Seina, even if you ever go back to Earth, you must not tell Kai anything. If you have an interesting idea, why don’t you join us when we surprise him?” Airi said, laughing like a mischievous child.

“I see……”

That certainly sounded interesting.

Although he didn’t know when “that time” would come, it would be nice to be the mastermind behind it together with Kiriko. Seina’s face lit up as he imagined what Kai would

look like.

“By the way… Airi, how related are you to the Masaki family?”

“Me? I’m… not originally from Masaki or anything. It’s just…”

Airi, in stark contrast to her usual self, blushed and began mumbling.

“…That Yosho is my husband.”

The engagement ring shone on the hand placed over her smiling mouth.

“Oh, is that so…”

(I see, that is.)

“…Airi-san is Tenchi-senpai’s grandmother!”

“Don’t call me, grandmother!”

Immediately, a demonic retort roared out.

“Sorry!”

“Hey, Seina! I’m a beautiful young woman, so why would I want to be called an old lady? Huh?”

Airi suddenly put her arm around his shoulders and rubbed against him.

She tried to brush it off by saying that “I’m young and beautiful”. More importantly, if they carried on like this, it could lead to the same situation as before.

(Airi-san, you have a husband…but wait a second. In the dramas that my mother often watches, the presence of a husband doesn’t seem to be much of a hindrance. What’s more…)

Seina desperately tried to search his memory in an attempt to change the topic.

“…That’s right. Ah, well, I met someone called Masaki Minaho on Seto-sama’s ship, what is your relationship with her…”

“Oh really? She’s my daughter.” Airi quickly pulled away and started talking. It seemed she managed to get back on track.

“She’s a good girl, but she won’t get married. And the other day, too. ……”

“Uh, yeah…”

—It was good that she managed to get back on track. It looked like he was going to have to listen to a mother’s complaints endlessly… Well, it was far better than turning into some dubious endurance exploration trip with an affair.

“Well, here we are.”

Seina was next taken to a place called the Academy’s Clothing Department, which, as the name suggested, was where uniforms and various equipment were provided and adjusted.

Seina immediately put on the GP uniform.

“Surprisingly… it’s not that different from Earth clothes.”

The clothes he had seen so far were similar in design to those he had seen on Earth. He hadn’t seen anyone wearing tight-fitting silver suits. The clothes he was wearing now were also very ordinary, although they felt high quality against his skin.

“They’re all one-size-fits-all, and when you press the adjustment buttons on the clothes, they will stretch or contract to fit your body.”

“That definitely feels like future technology.”

“They have the latest generation of a nano force field of special energy bodies around the body. It can be programmed to change its color, design, and texture, absorb and emit perspiration, and even have medical controls, which is completely different from your concept of clothing. It’s a bit like riding a large robot in terms of function.”

“That’s amazing…”

“Well, most people wear clothes made from normal fabrics, similar to what you have on Earth. Although, the colors and designs can vary wildly.”

“Um… why doesn’t anyone want to wear that robot-like thing with the force field?”

“Convenient isn’t always the best.” Airi replied while checking the equipment for Seina.

"It's the same with food. It's boring to take just one pill because you can get the exact amount you need, right? You can do that as much as you want, but it's more fun to eat something that's been properly cooked from the ingredients. Cooking is fun too."

“That’s true.”

“I guess you could say that people enjoy the inconvenience. Instead of prioritizing efficiency, people are looking for something like ‘comfort’. Of course, this will go out of fashion soon, so we may soon see a return to prioritizing convenience and saving time.”

“I see……” Seina felt both disappointed and relieved.

In terms of his fascination with extreme technology, he would like to wear amazing clothes and taste food that was completely different from that of Earth. However, as Airi said, such a life would be boring if it lasted forever.

As the saying went, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do”, and there was nothing better than keeping your living environment, especially your diet, constant.

As he was trying to convince himself that the uniform was comfortable, his hand suddenly touched some kind of switch.

“Wha……?”

Kyuuuuugh.

The size of the uniform was adjusted with a light sound.

No, this was not an adjustment. It clearly contracted beyond its limits!

“Um, hey, Airi-san!” He called out to Airi, who was going to sign the receipt for his uniforms, but she didn’t seem to hear him.

Meanwhile, the uniform continued to tighten around Seina’s body.

(…Ahh, the flowers…the fields…)

Seina’s vision went black.

Now, at the time Seina was strolling through the flower fields.

Amane Kaunaq was having her first meal in the penthouse near the GP Academy that she had just purchased. With all the new furniture, she was ready for her new life.

“But, as a teacher at the Academy…”

She glanced at the instructor’s uniform on the force field mannequin.

For Amane, who has a bold personality that didn’t match her appearance and family background, the crime scene was the place where she was most suited. She was now working as a lecturer for an indefinite period. For her, this was a major demotion.

—I told Airi-sama that, though—

Even though Amane had good intuition, why didn’t she realize that Seina was an Earthling? And more importantly, why didn’t she think of that?

“…Well, what’s done is done, can’t be helped. Hahahaha.”

(Let’s think positively. Being Seina’s teacher wouldn’t be so bad after all. After all…)

“Pfft…Kiriko’s, Seina-chan, you know.”

This was a surprising statement from Kiriko, who usually came across as being extremely serious and uptight.

Amane was a classmate at GP Academy and had been a close friend of Kiriko since back then, but she had no idea about the friendships she had on Earth. And to be honest, she had no idea that the boy she nearly drowned at Tenchi's house was someone Kiriko even called "chan"…

Amane was grateful for her own carelessness and thrilled at the pleasure of being able to tease the strict Kiriko.

Furthermore, Seina was, so to speak, an expert on bad luck. Amane, who was a demon of intuition and had a zero chance of encountering pirates, and Seina, who was a bundle of bad luck and inevitably attracted pirates. She was interested in a showdown, even if just a little.

"But even so…"

Amane remembered the drowned Seina and gently touched her lips.

She wondered why she tried artificial respiration so quickly. She had an emergency gas cylinder with her, and although she was a little worried, she wasn't that upset. But the moment she saw the unconscious Seina's face, she started giving him mouth-to-mouth without any hesitation.

"Well, it's true that it has a higher chance of survival, but…"

However, it was a secondary treatment for when mechanical resuscitation failed, not a first-line treatment.

"…Well, that just gives me something to make fun of Kiriko."

Muttering an excuse to the empty room, Amane took a big gulp of the masala tea she'd recently become obsessed with.

A unique aroma spread throughout her mouth.

"But you… you're really more than the rumors say. This is the first time I've heard of size control going out of control."

Airi chuckled as Seina was issued a new uniform.

It was a very common, simple technology with countless use cases. No matter how you operated it, there was no chance of it going out of control, such as causing the user to faint, and while such cases may have been possible during early development, they had never been reported to date.

"Sorry……"

"There's no need to apologize. At the very least, we have accumulated data that shows the probability of a malfunction occurring is not zero." Airi said this not comfortingly, but seriously.

The realization that she was not just being a nuisance eased Seina's mind somewhat.

"Now, all that's left is to take the aptitude test, but… it's taken a bit too long to get to this point."

Just as Airi said, it was starting to get dark.

"Oh well. I guess I'll give you the Academy information tomorrow."

"But earlier, that person said that classes starts tomorrow…"

"Oh, you mean Seiryo? It's okay, the lessons will proceed according to each person's ability and understanding, so it's okay if you're a little late! Since you've come all the way to space, you should make the most of it!"

As she said this, Airi slapped Seina on the shoulder.

A voice said what Seina was thinking in the back of his mind.

"That doesn't sound like something an educator would say, Airi-sama."

The voice belonged to Mikami, who looked annoyed.

"Hey, Mikami sensei? Why are you here?"

"No reason. I got a call from the dorm asking what was going on because Seina hadn't arrived yet, so I came to look for him."

"Now now, let's not be so serious! I'll let the people at the dorm know."

Mikami sighed softly at Airi's unashamed attitude.

"I wonder why there are so many Academy leaders like Seto-sama…"

"It's traditional, isn't it? …But we're in the same boat, right?"

Mikami returned Airi's smile, which was full of meaning, with a smile.

(…I guess this is what it's like to be caught up in a battle between monsters…)

Little did Seina know at the time that the impression he had at the time was spot on.

It wasn't long before Seina was shown to his dorm.

"Well, that's all for now. Women are not allowed in the men's dorms."

Airi, who had walked me to the very edge of the dormitory grounds, gave him a quick wink.

"Thank you very much for everything. I look forward to working with you again in the

future.”

Seina bowed again, but Airi waved her hand to tell him to stop, it was too formal.

No matter what, she seemed to be someone who wasn’t very good at this sort of thing. But, Seina could easily get along with her, so it was a little easier for him.

“Oh, that’s right. I should mention that the dorms don’t have private rooms. No matter how promising a GP star you are, you won’t get any special treatment in that regard.”

“I know. I don’t know anything so I need someone to teach me… It’s more reassuring to have a roommate.”

Hearing Seina speak, Airi cried, saying, “This child has grown into a fine young man.” By the way, he didn’t have even the slightest memory of being raised by Airi.

“If you’re having a hard time, you can always come back. Here’s my house key.”

Her cheeks turned red and she blurted out something outrageous.

“Then I’ll go here…”

He didn’t know what they’d do to him if he stayed here any longer. He quickly turned around and walked towards the dorm.

“Well, see you tomorrow. I’ll show you around, so look forward to it.”

He turned around instinctively when he heard that shocking comment from behind him.

“Tomorrow is the entrance ceremony!”

He responded firmly. He needed to make these things clear… if she’d listen…

“I can’t hear you! I can’t hear you! I can’t hear you!”

Airi played around with her hands over her ears like a child, then smiled and waved.

“Well, good night, see you tomorrow for sure.”

After speaking those words, Airi suddenly sped off in the car.

“Hey! Like I said many times, tomorrow…!”

She sped down the highway lit by the setting sun, and in a flash Airi’s car was out of sight.

After seeing her off, Seina sighed and smiled. Even though he was being manipulated, he didn’t feel any resentment at all.

“…But even so, it’s not that different from when I was on Earth…”

Kiriko was also there.

Amane was also there.

Airi and Elma, and lots of other kind-hearted people.

But it still seemed like bad luck.

"…Okay, let's give it a try!" Saying this as if convincing himself, Seina went inside the dormitory.

"I have to make sure Airi doesn't find me tomorrow!"

A little anxiety and great expectations dominated his mind as he set off.

—Yamada Seina, Earthling. 15 years old.

As of today, he had completed his registration as a new student at the GP Academy.

Characteristics, skills, special abilities, and weak points are all "bad luck"

[Tenchi Muyo! GXP Volume 1 End]

Afterword

We've kept you waiting for a very long time, but here is the first volume of the novel version of "Tenchi Muyo GXP". It was supposed to be released while the TV anime was on, but it's already been half a year since it ended… I'm surprised. I'm shocked. In other words, I'm sorry it's late.

I was asked to novelize it because I had written the scenario for the anime version of GXP, but I had never written a novel in my life, so it was a struggle.

Because, in your scenario.

Seina, shyly scratched his head.

In a novel, it would be easy to do with

"Seina would put his hand on his head and said something with a shy smile on his face, as if to pooh-pooh the thought. It's what you might call a 'blah blah' situation."

I have to write something like that. It doesn't make any sense though.

Still, it's a blessing that such wonderful books can be created.

However, my contributions were minimal, and it was Kajishima-san who came up with the

story, added various settings, and revised the text. Normally, this afterword would be written by Kajishima-san as a matter of "progress" or fan service, like "I don't care about some other writer's crap, just post Kajishima's writing, here," but, you see, I have various circumstances. Please understand.

To give you a brief explanation of the contents, "GXP Volume 1" follows the story from episodes 1 to the latter half of episode 4 of the TV series. It includes portrayals of the characters' emotions that could not be fully depicted within the 20-minute time frame of each episode, as well as settings that directly link to the world of Kajishima's Tenchi so far, so I think it will be enjoyable for both fans of the original series and GXP fans. Also, if you discovered GXP through this novel, be sure to check out the anime version on DVD as well. Advertisement.

To give you a little back story, the original plan for the GXP novelization was to end with just one volume. It was like, "Let's just follow the anime up to episode ten for now." However, after I finished writing the first episode and Kajishima added more, it suddenly ended up being this long.

"I'm writing this to complement the anime, so there's no point in just skimming through it."

Following Kajishima-san's wishes, I continued writing without worrying about the length, and ended up fitting up to four chapters into one volume, which was a nice round number.

If I had continued without dividing it into volumes, it would have become a work of about 800 pages by now, which would be more like a four-slice bread than a paperback. If you got hit with a corner of it, you'll die, man. Also, if it's too thick, it's a problem for bookstores. It won't fit on the shelves. Speaking of shelves, there are some stores that pack paperbacks really tightly. That's a problem, you take it out but can't put it back. It's still manageable at places like Fujimi Fantasia, but it's difficult at a certain French Shoin Bunko. If you try desperately to put it back, that's also suspicious. I had no choice but to leave it somewhere, but then a neat and tidy office lady came next to me. She was holding a Western fashion magazine under her arm. Her hair was shiny. That alone made me excited, and I said, "Oh my, this book was lying on the floor. What would happen if a child saw it? That's really outrageous," even though she wasn't asked. This really doesn't matter.

Anyway, this is the first Kajishima Tenchi novel in a long time. If you've already finished it, please take your time to re-read it. If you're the odd one out and started reading the afterword without reading the main story, please enjoy it from now on. So, I hope you'll enjoy it again…

March 2003

Hideki Shirane